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THE

CHRONICLES OF CASTLE CLOYNE.

THE CHRONICLES OF CASTLE CLOYNE;

OR,

PICTURES OF THE MUNSTER PEOPLE.

BY

M. W. BREW,

AUTHOR OF "THE BURTONS OF DUNROE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE

CHRONICLES OF CASTLE CLOYNE.

CHAPTER I.

OONAGH "TAKES TO THE ROAD."

Love lightens every burden, and sweetens every pain,
And makes the weary-hearted feel their toil is not in vain.
It makes the homeliest face look fair, the poorest cot look bright.
And gives even to the faint and weak, a majesty and might.

What cannot Love accomplish, what cannot Love endure?
Where is the grief it cannot soothe, the pang it cannot cure?
Oh Love! oh sweet, all-mighty Love! what a desert life would be,
If we poor weary pilgrims were not cheered along by thee!

THE emergency that Oonagh had so much dreaded, and for which she had made some small provision, came in its own time, and sooner than she had calculated on. Her kind mistress died after a short illness, and the young men, her sons, decided on selling the interest of their farm, and emigrating to America, towards which country—in that sad time as ever

since—the heart of the Irish peasant turned, when he could no longer find foothold on his native soil. The Mulhalls sold their cattle and furniture, and after paying Oonagh whatever was due to her, gave her a small sum of money as a present, to mark their appreciation of her long, faithful service, and help her to live until she could succeed in finding another place.

But to get another place was a thing much easier said than done. By this time the farmers of the country were all ruined and broken down; some so completely that they were swept off the face of the earth as if they had never existed at all, and those who were able to struggle on, were obliged for the most part to dispense with hired labour, and do their own work. The gentry were just as badly off as the class below them, for their rents were unpaid, and as they had no money, and could not do manual labour like the farmers, their lands soon became desolate wastes. There was therefore little or no employment for the labouring poor. Such of them as could manage it fled from the land of their birth as if it was infected by a pestilence, and those who could not fly were plunged in a sea of poverty and misery, of which no man could see the end.

It was an unfortunate time for Oonagh to be once

more cast adrift. She tried very hard to get another place, but in vain. She had a first-class discharge from the son of her late mistress, but that went for nothing, when no one wanted a servant. In some houses where she applied, she was told that she would be taken if she was satisfied to work for her "bit," and in others, though she was offered wages, it was at so low a rate, that it was only one degree better than working for her "bit." Neither of these magnificent offers could she of course entertain. If she was herself alone in question, she might accept anything she could get that would enable her to live until better times came round again, but then there was the child to be thought of! What was to feed and clothe him, if she were not to be remunerated for her time and labour? She was quite sure that once her payments would come to an end, Farmer Jim would make short work of the matter, by sending little Johnny at once to the poor-house.

Then there was Bran! Her father's faithful dog was growing old now, and what was to become of *him*? Even little as he would eat, and coarse as his food would be, no one in that hard time would employ a servant who had such a follower. It was a hard case, and a sore dilemma, and as she revolved it all in her own mind, her heart almost failed her.

But that heart was a stout one. It had borne a great deal, and it would bear a great deal more before its native courage and energy could be stamped out of it. For her own part, she could bear a great deal, but that the child should want, or should be hungry, cold, or naked, was what she could *not* bear. Before that should come to pass, she would work her hands to the very bones. But then she knew there were many others just as willing to work as she was, and they could get no work to do. Every sort of business and industry, both in town and country, had come to a standstill, and was, as it were, paralysed. But still she did not despair, though the problem to be solved was very difficult, and had cost her many a sleepless night, and sorrowful day. But at last like an inspiration from Heaven a bright thought broke in upon her mind, bringing with it hope and joy. She would become a pedlar!

No sooner had this idea occurred to her, than she hastened to carry it into execution, for there was neither lassitude of body nor indecision of mind about Oonagh. She went off to the nearest town, bought a basket suitable for her purpose, and laid out part of her little savings in furnishing it with an assortment of such small wares as her own experience told her would be most in request in the remote country districts.

This small beginning she got on very reasonable terms, as she was to be "in the trade," and of course likely to return for a supply again and again. She had balls and skeins of thread, both black and white, brass thimbles and wooden pin-cases, papers of needles and hair-pins, pieces of tape and bobbin, and such like cheap wares as she thought she could not fail to sell, even among the very poor. She left her little trunk with a kind neighbour who promised to take care of it for her, and threw an old shoe after her when she was leaving, for good luck, and with her basket on her arm she set out on her travels, followed by her dog.

The constant walking was weary work at first; but in a little time she got used to it, as well as to the weight of the basket. Sometimes, after long miles of lonely travel, she could only realise a few pence, but just as often she was more fortunate. Gradually she became known in the country districts, and the periodical advent of "the dalin' woman" was looked forward to by the wives and daughters of the farmers, with no small degree of interest. Her arrival was a welcome break to the dull monotony of their lives, and they were able to supply themselves with small necessaries, without having the trouble of going to the town for them. Everywhere she went the country people were very kind to her, as far as

their limited means allowed, for her story had gradually oozed out, and they were all both glad and anxious to help her, even in a little. She was always invited to partake of whatever meal was going on whenever she made her appearance at a country house, and her dog got food as well as herself. If she came late in the evening, or if the weather was bad, she was kept for the night, had breakfast with the family next morning, and very often was presented on leaving with a piece of coarse brown bread to take with her "agin the road," and of which she made her dinner when there was no chance of getting anything better. She won golden opinions as she went along, for she was obliging and good-tempered, while her strict honesty made her trusted and respected.

Whenever the weather was too inclement to permit of her being out of doors, she utilised the time by making caps for the country women, and clothes for their children, which were eagerly bought up, and left her a fair profit for her trouble. With Oonagh, either feet or hands were at work, and whenever she felt tired and longed for rest, which often happened—for human muscles are not exactly like machinery that can go on for an unlimited time—the thought of the little child was at all times a

spur sufficient to give her fresh courage, and impel her to renewed exertion.

By-and-by, as she got more accustomed to her small traffic, and became more expert at it, she enlarged it, though very gradually and cautiously. She added to her little stock some cheap calicoes, muslins, and lace, check for aprons, and a few bright coloured neckties both for men and women. Soon she had cheap paper for copybooks for the children, spelling-books, and catechisms, all of which she sold easily. She trained her dog to watch the basket by night as well as by day, and the intelligent creature soon came to comprehend what she required him to do; and woe betide the careless or unwary person that came near his charge when his mistress was absent, or otherwise employed.

It was a hard life, this perpetual trudging from one farmhouse to another, in all weather, and alone, for Bran, intelligent as he was, could hardly be considered as a companion. Her fare was always coarse, and often very scanty, her clothing of the plainest kind, and her lodging as inexpensive and humble as was consistent with cleanliness and decency. To herself, she was a very hard task-mistress, resolutely denying herself the smallest indulgence or recreation, that would involve even the

most trifling cost. But her great love for the child, a love that grew greater day after day, brightened her weary life, and softened every privation. She felt herself amply repaid for anything she suffered or did, when she saw him growing daily in beauty and intelligence. She saw also with much sorrow that though tolerably healthy, he was of slight frame, and had a delicacy of constitution that would make him quite unfit for severe or continuous labour. She saw him now more frequently than when she was under obedience to another, and her opportunities of observing him were of course multiplied. Every time she saw him, it was with dismal misgivings as to the future that lay before him, and the fate that awaited him, when she should be taken away. She and Sally—whose opinion of the boy's want of that robust strength, possessed in such affluence by the other children, perfectly coincided with her own—had many long and anxious consultations on this all-important question. Though the good woman did not love him with the same intense and passionate love that absorbed the soul of Oonagh, yet she had all the affection for him that Irishwomen as a rule feel for the child they have nursed and fostered, and the little fellow had contrived to gain a place in her kind

motherly heart, only second to that occupied by her own children. With his father's good looks, he inherited his mother's affectionate disposition, and sweet engaging manners, that won all hearts, as hers had always done. And combined with this, he had a grave thoughtfulness that was very unusual in so young a child.

"I often puzzle my brains to find out what on earth you are to do wid him," said Sally one night, when the two women were enjoying the rare luxury of a sly cup of tea by the kitchen fire, after Jim and all the children had gone to bed.

"I often think ov that myself, an' like you, I'm fairly puzzled by it."

"He never could do hard work, though he's bright enough at other things. He'd do very well, if you could manage to give him a thrade. A thradesman has a fine aisy life, an' as long as he has his health, he needn't be beholden to any wan."

"Sure enough, 'tis a fine thing to have a thrade, but I'm not thinkin' ov that for Johnny."

"I suppose you couldn't afford it, an' 'tis a pity," said Sally, with a sigh. "A shoemaker airns a dale of money, an' he needn't be out undher the weather to do it. An' I know myself ov a tailor that has money in the savings bank, an' a nate little house well furnished."

"Johnny shall not be either a shoemaker or a tailor," said Oonagh, in a tone of decision. "Your plan is good, but I have a betther wan, an' it isn't to-day, or istherday, that it came into my head, but a long time ago."

"An' what is that, *eroo*?"

"Johnny is to be a priest."

"A priest!!!!" The four notes of admiration can but feebly express the excessive astonishment evinced both in the voice and manner of Sally at this startling announcement.

"Aye; why not? His father was intinded for the althar; but you see he lost his vocation, an' instid ov goin' off to Maynooth, he got married to Shusy Burke. This poor child will make a fine priest, Sally; he's the very moral ov it, young as what he is."

"Sure enough; he's the timbers ov a priest, every inch ov him, an' I'll go bail, he never will bring any discredit on the clergy. But oh, Oonagh, woman! how could you do it? It runs you hard to do what you're doin' for him, an' not to break your poor heart intirely, be thryin' to do what is out an' out beyant you."

"God will help me," said Oonagh, raising her eyes, that were shining with moisture, up to heaven.

"Sure He helped me all along, an' now when I want His help more than ever, He won't dhraw back His hand. Oh, Sally! if I could only live to see Johnny wearin' the robes, an' goin' up the steps ov the althar, I'd die in pace."

"I'd be a'most as proud an' glad as yourself to see that day; but I don't well see how it can be managed at all. It takes a dale ov money before a boy is priested; schoolin', an' books, an' dacent clothes, an' thin his board, an' lodgin', in some place near a good schoolmasther. Where is all that money to come from, I ax yourself?"

"I have a thrifle saved, an' my little bisniss is improvin', for the times isn't as bad as what they wor, thank God. I'm used to the road now, an' the people knows me, an' every wan is good to me. I'm gettin' on a dale betther than I ever expected I would. Don't go agin me, Sally, in this, for my heart is set on makin' him a priest. Sure, if I'm not able to do it, there's no harm done, an' he can get whatever thrade he has a fancy for. But I'll be able to do it, Sally; my heart tells me I will."

"God enable you, *asthore*. 'Tis a great undertakin', surely, but you have great courage, an' God fits the back for the burden."

"He's not strong an' healthy, like them lads ov

yours, an' he never could get his bread by hard labour."

"'Tis hard to advise you, an' I'm no ways clever in them sort ov things. But couldn't you make a peeler ov him, or a clark makin' up accounts? Would aither ov them do?"

"No, Sally, they would not. To be ever an' always stoopin' down over a desk in a close, hot room, would very soon make an ind ov poor Johnny. An' I have no frind in coort that would get him into the peelers for me. I hear that it requires great intherist intirely for a boy to be made a peeler. But if he was a priest, he'd have fine fresh air always, betune ridin' an' walkin', an' he'd have good nourishin' food, an' beyant all, he'd be a gintleman, an' have the life ov a gintleman, an' the respect ov wan. 'Tis worth thryin', anyhow. He'd make a good holy priest, I'm sure, an' if I didn't think that, I never would put him into the Church at all. Johnny is so good, an' mild, an' sarious in himself, that he's for all the world cut out for the clergy."

"Faix, then, that's the clane thruth; 'tis himself that is."

"If I had to beg ha'pence from dure to dure, I'll do it, but I don't dhread ever comin' down to *that*. I'm a dacent father an' mother's child, an' no

beggar, an' you'll see that I'll be able wid the help ov God to sind my boy to school, an' to college, at my own cost, an' by the profits ov my own honest industhry, without any wan's charity. See if I don't!"

"God enable you, poor woman, an' lave you your health, an' power a blessin' down on you! It would be a grand thing surely if you wor able to do it. But I'm not in dhread ov you, nor will I ever agin say a word that would put you off the good work you have taken in hand. You're such a brave woman, Oonagh, that when wanst you take a thing in head, you'll be sure to carry it through," cried Sally, in genuine admiration of the great boldness and courage of her companion. "But it will be hard work on you, an' take a long time before it is done."

"So itself. I'm used to hard work, an' as long as God laves me my health, there's no fear in life ov Johnny. Oh, if I could only live to see my boy wearin' the robes, an' hear his first mass, I'd die happy. Then my work will be done, an' I can go home to rest with all my people! An' when I meet his father an' mother, I needn't be in dhread to face 'em, for as well as I kept the promise that I made to my mother, I'll kept just as faithful the promise that I made to them."

CHAPTER II.

OONAGH MEETS WITH SOME OLD FRIENDS.

Famine is in thy cheeks,
Need and oppression starveth in thy eyes,
Upon thy back hangs ragged misery,
The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law.
SHAKESPEARE.

FIRED by this new ambition, the heart of Oonagh took fresh courage, and though she did not work harder, or fare worse than before, for that was hardly possible, she certainly in no respect relaxed her efforts, or abated the rule of rigid self-denial she had long since laid down for herself. The glorious vision of the child of her love "wearing the robes," and standing on the altar to preach the word of God, was for ever before her eyes. The severe hardship and incessant labour of her daily life were all forgotten, when she pictured that brilliant future. All she had hitherto suffered was gone, and done with, and all that she would inevitably have to

suffer, before that picture could become reality, she determined to confront with a resolute and hopeful spirit. She did not disguise from herself, that she had entered upon what was for her a gigantic undertaking, one beset by great difficulties, and only to be accomplished by long years of desperate effort, and unconquerable will. But she was not dismayed by the enormous difficulty of the task she had set herself, nor by the great length of time that should elapse before she could bring it to a completion, but she kept that joyful completion ever before her eyes. Like all the Irish peasantry, she had a strong faith in God, and a child-like reliance on His mercy and goodness. Her word was ever, "God will help me," and He did. Regular exercise in the open air, to which might be added an innocent mind, and the peace of a good conscience, kept her in good health, and, little by little, she was able to lay by money towards the attainment of the great object that was now become the sole purpose of her life.

One evening, at the close of a hard winter's day, she was walking along very slowly, for the basket on her arm, being better stocked than it had been formerly, was very heavy, and she had gone a long distance since morning. Close beside her was her inseparable companion Bran. A long stretch of

bleak mountain road lay on before her, and as far as her eye could reach, she saw no house at any side in which she could seek shelter for the night. She began to get much alarmed, for to spend a night in the open air, exposed to the action of a sharp frost, was to court sickness, and probably death. She trudged wearily on, but no house could be seen, and she was almost in despair—if such a word as despair could be found in Oonagh's vocabulary—when she came to a most miserable-looking hovel, standing in some boggy ground, a little in from the road. It was so small and desolate, that she at first thought it could be only a shed for cattle; but shelter of any kind was not to be despised on such a night, and to get a corner among the dumb creatures of God, under cover, was better than sleeping in the open fields.

She turned off the high road, and made her way towards this cabin, but not without much difficulty, owing to the increasing darkness, and the soft, marshy nature of the ground. As she approached, she heard the sound of some one coughing within, and cheered by this token of human neighbourhood, she raised the latch of the crazy door, and entered with her usual password of "God save all here."

"God save you kindly," was the reply in a man's voice, but who the man was, or where he was, she

could not make out, for the place was in almost total darkness. There was no light but what came from some sods of wet turf smouldering on the hearth. Her heart sank within her, for the darkness and the smouldering sods reminded her of the evening that she had gone to the house of the Molloys. It was the same thing over again, except that here a human voice had replied to her salutation.

"'Tis a cold evenin'," she said, while she tried as well as she could to make her way to this apology for a fire.

"I b'lieve so," was the answer, in a weary, apathetic tone, as if the speaker was ill, or weak, or both.

"If you have a bit ov candle, honest man, I'd be very thankful to you if you would light it. I'm fairly lost wid the cold, an' if I could see where the turf is, I'd make down a fire," she said, after a short silence.

"I have no candle, but there is a *smuthawn* ov bogdale that'll do as well," and suiting the action to the word, he took the *smuthawn* from a corner behind him, and threw it on the hearth. Being very dry, it blazed up at once, and then looking round she saw the most wretched place that was ever inhabited by human creatures. It consisted of only one room—if

it could be called a room—at one end of which was the hearth, and at the other a bed of dirty straw, on which, covered by some miserable rags, lay some person apparently fast asleep. There was no furniture whatever but one old table with only two legs, that was propped up against the mud wall by large stones, a small iron pot, and a *sugán* chair, on which the man who had spoken to her was sitting. As soon as he could see her he rose, and with the instinctive courtesy of the Irish peasant, pushed the chair towards her, and sat down again on an old turf-basket turned bottom upwards. He was a tall man, and might once have been well-looking; but now it would be indeed difficult to trace the least appearance of good looks in the broken and abject wretch that he seemed to have become. His face, which was very thin, and lividly pale, was covered with beard, his hair hung down in long matted locks, and his body, which had been a powerful one, was so destitute of flesh, so gaunt and bony, that it was nothing but an animated skeleton. His bones, covered only by shrivelled yellow skin, protruded in many places through the scanty rags that hung loosely around him. Up to this, Oonagh had thought John Molloy's house the most wretched human habitation she had ever seen—so very wretched, in-

deed, that she never remembered it without a shudder —but she could no longer assign it that mournful pre-eminence. There are degrees in misery; and in coming to this hut, she had reached the very lowest depth.

Very soon Oonagh, with her usual energy, made a good fire with some sods of turf she found in another corner, and warmed her chilled hands and feet at its welcome blaze. Then she took from her pocket a small stone bottle containing milk, and some coarse brown bread. She broke the bread into two equal parts, and silently offered one half to her companion, who looked positively starved. He snatched it eagerly from her hand, and breaking off a morsel, put it in his mouth; but the effort to swallow it was too much for the famine-stricken creature, and he fell down on the ground in a fainting fit.

In a moment Oonagh had raised him up, and placing him in a reclining position against the wall, sprinkled him with cold water, and chafed his temples, and thin, cold hands. When she saw he was beginning to recover a little, she gave him some water to drink, which revived him. Then she warmed the milk in the old pot, and putting it to his lips, saw that he drank it with all the avidity of one who was perishing of hunger. When he had taken it, she

again offered him the bread, but he could not take it. So she gave him the remainder of the milk in her bottle, and she and Bran ate the brown bread, with a drink of water to wash it down.

"You are very low an' wake in yourself," she said when she had finished her frugal supper. "How is it that you let yourself down so greatly?"

"These two days I had nothing to ate," he said in the same weary, apathetic voice, "an' before that I was wake enough. 'Tis a long time now since I had a regular male ov vittles, only snappin' up a bit now an' agin, when I could get it. That's what run me down, sure."

"Fake an' sure, honest man, 'tis no admiration in life that you're wake an' low. An' have you no wan at all to take care ov you, an' see that you have some food?"

"Musha, while the wife was wid me, she managed it, an' how she did it, or where she made it out, God knows, for I don't. But she's gone now, *foreer!*"

"An' where did she go?"

"She didn't go anywhere at all. She's in that bed that you see beyant there."

Oonagh glanced at the heap of dirty straw at the other end that he miscalled a bed, and now she remembered that the person who was lying on it had

not once moved since she had entered the cabin. A horrible suspicion took hold of her, and though her nervous system was perfect, thanks to her sound health, and free, wholesome life in the open air, she shuddered from head to foot.

"Is she dead?" she asked, in an awe-struck whisper.

"She is," he replied, in the same dull, monotonous way in which he had hitherto spoken, and in a voice that was a fitting accompaniment to his listless manner. In truth the man was only half alive, and all feeling and sense were crushed out of him; his very heart seemed frozen and dead.

It is a very noticeable fact that in all the statistics of the great Irish famine, its wretched victims are described as having succumbed to their dreadful fate with a silent resignation that in some instances was patient fortitude, and in others—and these last were the greater numbers—with an apathy, a sort of dull numbness, a moral paralysis, that made no complaint, and asked for neither sympathy nor pity. They suffered silently, and died in silence, as the dumb beasts die. Provided they received the last rites of their church, they were indifferent to everything else in a world that had no life for them but one of misery, and no death but the horrible one of famine. Their

native shrewdness was blunted, the humour and gaiety that is an integral part of the Irish nature was totally extinguished, and even their family affection, which is their most shining quality, and one that ought to go far in redeeming many defects, lay chilled and dormant. Their minds were dead long before the breath had left their wasted bodies; all feeling and all sensibility, except alone to physical suffering, were extinct long before they died. As a rule—which, like all other rules, has its exceptions—the Irish people are the most patient in the world, and the famine years of '47 and '48 proved it. He who in that calamitous time so sorely afflicted them, alone knows how patient they were!

After a moment, when Oonagh had time to recover herself from the horror of this dismal announcement, she flung another large knot of bogwood on the fire so as to shed more light around, and went to the side of the miserable bed. There was no need to tell her that the person who lay on it was dead, and had been so for some hours. No attempt had been made to straighten the limbs, or perform the last sad offices due to the dead. The eyes, however, were closed, as if Death for once had been merciful, and came when his victim was asleep.

Oonagh knelt down on the damp floor, and drawing

aside the long, tangled dark hair, gazed on the dead face. It was fearfully thin and worn, and one hand and arm, without covering of any kind, lay outside the ragged quilt, only bones and sinews, held together by the livid skin that covered them. There was something in that pinched, worn face that attracted Oonagh's attention in no ordinary way. She must have seen that face before. There was something in it that reminded her of her youth, of her old happy home, of the pleasant time when people were not dying, inch by inch, of cold and hunger. Where could she have seen that face? She looked at it long and earnestly, until at last feature by feature, and line by line, the poor dead face became familiar. Was this Judy? Was this squalid and emaciated corpse all that remained of the bright-eyed, joyous-hearted girl that was like a sunbeam wherever she went, full of life, and gladness, and laughter? Here was one of the three merry girls who had tried the charm of the Dumb Cake, and had dreamed she was to be married to "Mad Dick Considine"! She had "dreed her weird," had married Dick, and this was the end of it! Oonagh covered her face with her hands, and cried as if her heart was breaking.

"Oh, Judy, Judy! *'a graw geál, agus m'ánima*

yeelish! * did it come to this wid you at last?" she wailed out in the bitterness of that terrible surprise.

Her sobs almost choked her, shaking her whole body with the violence of her emotion, while her cries sounded strange and weird in their passionate vehemence as she knelt on the damp earth of that wretched cabin. But the husband—he whose animal spirits, when he was young, were so high as to get for him the nickname of "Mad Dick"—never seemed to hear her cries, or be in the least disturbed by them. He was too low for that now, too far gone in the deadness of his great misery. He sat on the old basket, with his head laid up against the wall, as if nothing could ever again rouse him from his stupid apathy.

When she had fairly exhausted herself crying, Oonagh rose from her knees, went back to the fire, and sat down beside the wretched man.

"Oh, Dick, *asthore*! I didn't know you at all when first I came in," she said, still weeping. "Yarra, how could I ever think that it was yourself that was in it at all? You wor such a fine, clever, able boy in the good ould times."

---

* *'A graw geál, agus m'ánima yeelish!*—My bright love, and my dearest soul!

"Aye, in throth."

"An' don't you know me, Dick? Don't you remember me, Oonagh MacDermott, that lived wid my father on the Castle Cloyne estate, out westwards?"

"No, I don't remember you; but you're a good woman, whoever you are, an' your cry is the only keen that'll be ris over my *colleen dhas dhuv.** It was God surely that dhruv you in the dure to look afther her, for I'm not able to do it. She was a purty girl wanst on a time, though she hasn't much the look ov that now, my poor Judy! But sure that's a long time ago now, an' I a'most forget it."

"How did it all happen, Dick? What misfortune was it that came down on ye at all?"

"Wisha, the same misfortune that came down on many a wan besides us. While the piatees lasted we wor comfortable enough, an' as happy as the day was long; but they all fell rotten in wan week, an' then everything wint wrong wid us. We had to sell the three cows, wan afther another, to buy male, an' then the pigs, an' then there was nothing left to pay the rint. When we owed two years' rint, we wor put out ov the house, an' the spot ov land."

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* *Colleen dhas dhuv*—Pretty dark girl.

"An' how did ye get on afther that?"

"Oyeh, we didn't get on at all, nor never ris our heads agin; how could we? The nabors all gathered together wan Sunday afther mass, an' built this little cabin for us, an' I got a day's work here an' there, ov an odd time. Ov late I was not able to work at all, though I did my livin' best, but sure how can any wan work on wan male a day ov the yalla stirabout, an' no sort ov kitchen wid it but a grain ov salt? She," pointing to the straw bed, "did her best too, but holy Mother ov God! what good was her best? She was dyin' ov hunger, an' she had an infant at her breast that was also dyin', for when her mother's milk failed, there was no food for her but the yalla male, an' the poor little craythur was too young for *that* stuff. Many a time poor Judy, though badly able, would walk miles an' miles to beg a dhrop ov milk for that child, an' then when she'd come back, it would be to spind the night long by the fire wid it in her lap, thryin' to hush it, an' keep it from cryin', so that I'd have some sleep afther my day's work. You never would b'lieve, Oonagh, how quiet an' patient my poor girl was, she that had such a high sperrit, an' was so proud in herself. I used to thry an' coax the baby to come to me sometimes for a start, to let Judy lie down an' get a little sleep, but she was so cross an' fractious

wid the dinth ov hunger, that she could not bear to be anywhere but in the mother's arms. It cried, an' cried, night an' day evermore, till the sound ov its cryin' went through an' through me like a sharp knife, an' I prayed to God, if it was His holy will, to take it out ov its misery. But though I often lost patience wid the poor little object, Judy never did, but was patient an' lovin' wid it, till it dhrew its last breath in her lap. I think," added Dick reflectively, "she might make a betther fight only for that baby. It wore her out to be without sleep as well as food, an' then you persave, she was fairly heart-scalded to see her wan little child dyin' by inches, without bein' able to save it."

"I often hard, Dick, that you wor always a very good an' lovin' husband to poor Judy," she said, touched to the soul by his simple narrative.

"Ah! sure, 'tis all aiquil now. I might just as well be the other thing for what odds it makes, now that she's lyin' out fornent me, starved to death. I'd give my life for her, but what good was that? I couldn't give her food for herself an' her dyin' baby, an' that was a smaller thing than givin' my life. Sure, 'tis all wan now; neither ov 'em, thank God, will ever feel cold an' hungry again!"

All this he said in a monotonous, droning voice,

and in a dry matter-of-fact way, as if he was speaking not of himself, his wife, and child, but of strangers with whom he had no concern, and in whom he took no interest. His great misery had, indeed, brought him as low in mind as he was in body, and reduced him to a state of passive, stolid indifference. He had nothing more to lose now, for all that he had valued and loved had been taken from him, and nothing more to suffer, except the mere pang of death itself, which could have little terror for one so wretched and so abject, who might be said to have arrived at the utmost limit of human sorrow and endurance.

CHAPTER III.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Better is a neighbour that is near, than a friend who is far off.

PROVERBS.

WHEN the first faint light of the gloomy winter's day stole in through the crevices of the rickety door, Oonagh went outside the hovel, for she was sick and half suffocated from the foul air she had been breathing all the night. Her eyes were sore and inflamed from weeping, as well as from the smoke that had not any outlet but a hole in the roof, miscalled a chimney. Her head was almost bursting with a violent headache, and she was feverish, and restless, from not having lain down all night. She longed to lie down, if only for an hour; but there was no bed but one in that cabin, and she could not go *there*. She remembered that a new task had been given her to

do, that she could not, and would not shrink from. With her usual simple piety, she felt that God had led her by the hand to do His own special work, which must be done for Him, quite irrespective of her own old love for poor Judy. To the clear, well-disciplined mind of this girl, a sense of duty—no matter what amount of self-sacrifice it entailed on her—was always paramount, and she never suffered anything to interfere with it, or turn her aside from it, even by a hair's breadth. She was as faithful to this instinct—for it was almost instinctive—now, as she had been at any time of her life, and at once she set herself steadily to think what she could best do in this sudden and sorrowful emergency. To an active, energetic woman like Oonagh this was not a hard task, or one that took much time to think over. She knew that whatever was to be done, should be by herself alone, for that poor Dick was now too utterly broken down, both mentally and bodily, to give her any assistance whatever. Refreshed by the morning air, and comforted in some degree by knowing that she had the means in a small way of helping this poor man, she went back to the cabin.

When she went in she left the door wide open, as well to let out the smoke, and let in the fresh air, as to give her light for the work she had to do. Poor

Dick was asleep, with his head against the wall, and his face, seen now by the broad light of day, looked even worse than it had done on the previous night—old, shrunken, ghastly, the very incarnation of famine. Making as little noise as possible, so that she should not break this merciful sleep that gave him a temporary oblivion, she made a fire, boiled some water, and proceeded to perform the last decent offices of womanly love towards the remains of poor Judy. It was a hard task, alone as she was, but she had a brave heart as well as a very tender one, and it carried her through with it. With reverent hands she washed and straightened the wasted limbs, smoothed back the black hair that was once so glossy and abundant, and taking a new muslin cap from her basket, tied it on the head with a bit of ribbon. Then she took off some of her own underclothing, and put them on the body. Having performed all these womanly duties of love and decency to a sister woman, she sallied forth again to try and procure some breakfast for herself and Dick. She had to walk about half a mile before she came to a house where she was able to get some milk and a loaf of white bread. She offered to pay for them, but when the owners heard her dismal story, they refused to take her money, though they were poor enough themselves. They had a

little *shebeen* at the side of the road, and kept a few loaves of bread for the use of their customers.

When Oonagh returned she found Dick awake, sitting by the fire in his usual apathetic way, as if he were only half alive. She boiled some of the milk, and breaking a large slice of the bread into it, gave it to him, and she shuddered when she saw the almost wolfish voracity with which the wretched man devoured it. What was left, she divided as usual with her dog.

"I have something to say to you, Dick," she said when the simple meal was over. "You're stronger now than what you wor last night, an' you can mind what I'm tellin' you."

"Folly on, I'm hearing to you," he replied listlessly.

"Very good. Well, we must first ov all have poor Judy berrid dacent. It is time now, for you told me last night that she was a good while dead, an' moreover, neither ov us can remain another night in this poor place."

"But sure I have no place to go to."

"Oh, yes, you have. There's an aunt ov yours lives over in Ballycar, an' though they're only strugglin' people, she an' her husband will give you a corner in their house, an' the bit an' sup, until we can look about us a little. If you wor wid them for a while, you'd recover yourself, an' be able to get

your own livin' wanst more. Haven't you a brother well off in America?"

"I have, sure, but what good is that to me?"

"Every good, wid the help ov God. Now, Dick, listen hether to me, an' you'll see what a fine plan I have in my head for you. I'll write to your brother, an' tell him all about poor Judy an' yourself, an' I'll say that you'll go out to him as soon as ever he sinds you the passage money, an' a thrifle to buy a shuit ov clothes, so that you won't be any discredit to him when you land over. My hand to you, Dick, when he gets that letther he'll sind you a cheque post-haste, an' more money in it than what I'll ax him for. See if he won't!"

"But I'll be dead long before his letther comes," cried poor Dick, in a voice that showed he didn't much care whether he was or not.

"Eyeh! Fake an' sure you won't," she said cheerily. "I tell you now, that wid the help ov God, this is the very poorest day you'll ever see. 'Tis poor enough, dear knows," with a glance round her, "but so itself. You're not bound in any way to this cabin, an' there's no rason in life why you'd stop in it another day. This mornin' while you wor asleep I was puzzlin' my brains to make out what

would be the best for us to do. Are you mindin' me, Dick, *aroon*?"

"I am, sure. Go on."

"Well, that's just what I thought ov, an' I hope you'll like my plan. I'd like greatly to have poor Judy berrid with her people, that wor ever an' always a dacent, honest ould stock, but I'm in dhread we couldn't manage that any way. Their berrin' place is too far away, an' it would take too much money to sind her there."

"But if *she* could speak to us," he said, pointing to the wretched bed, "she'd tell us that she'd like dearly to go to her little child."

"An' where is that, *eroo*?"

"Just hard by."

"Oh, then, that settles it. Where her little child is, we'll bring her, an' spare the money that could be usefuller laid out. I have a couple ov pound sewed up in my boddice, an' that will pay for the coffin, an' a few clothes that you must get before you go to your aunt. Her people-in-law is very dacent, I know, for I often go in their direction when I'm on my rounds, an' there's no call for her to be ashamed ov you when you walk in the dure to her. She's a good woman, an' her husband is a very good man, but b'lieve me, Dick, they'll give you a dale a

heartier welcome when they see you in dacent clothes, instid ov them dirty ould rags on your back. An' whin the letther comes from America, you'll be a fine, strong, able man agin, an' aiquil for the voyage out. Plase God, you'll be writin' home some fine day to tell us how well off an' rich you are."

"But Judy is gone! What good will it all be to me when I can't share it wid *her*?" he cried, with more feeling than he had as yet exhibited.

"She *is* gone, *foreer!* but sure she's wid God an' His blessed Mother. It was His holy will to take her, an' we can't go agin that. You must put her out ov your mind, an' think ov her only in your prayers, for you have yourself to think ov now, an' to thry to get well an' strong agin. An' now, what do you say to this plan ov mine? 'Tis the best that I could think ov. The couple ov pound is yours, an' heartily welcome. I'm sorry that I can't give you any more. I won't deny that I have it, but what I have I can hardly call my own. I have a delicate little boy dipindin' on me, an' what I have is for him, an' not for myself at all."

"I hard ov that child. But, Oonagh, *asthore*, I don't like takin' your money, that you put together wid so much hardship an' trouble, but it would be foolish in me to refuse such a good offer. All I can

say is that if I reach America alive, the very first money I airn will go to pay you back."

"God enable you, poor man! I'm no ways in dhread ov you at all. I won't deny that I'd like to be paid back agin, in regard ov little Johnny, but sure if you're not able to do it, I'll never miss it, an' it won't make no odds betune us."

"I had a couple ov pound ov my own wanst," he said, with a far-off look in his dull eyes, "an' a dale more to the back ov it, but that's a long time ago now. 'Tis a power ov money—two pound! Oh, Oonagh, if I had it this time past, or even a small share ov it, *she* an' her little baby wouldn't die ov could an' hunger out before my face!"

He burst into a wild passion of tears, the first he had shed since she came to the house. She was glad to see it, for it showed that he was roused out of his sullen torpor, and that his heart, that was almost turned to stone, had become softened. She let him cry on without any attempt at consolation, which would be an interruption as unseasonable as it would be vain. Time alone, she well knew, would be his surest and best consoler.

After some time he stood up, and walked, or rather tottered to the door.

"Where are you goin' now, Dick?" she asked.

"To see about the coffin."

"Come back agin; that's all settled. When I was out this mornin' to get the breakfast, I met a smart little gorsoon, an' I promised to give him sixpence, if he'd run off to the town, an' tell the coffin-maker to sind out the coffin. He'll be sure to do my message, for he looked, poor boy, as if sixpinces worn't over plinty wid him. An' as the graveyard is so convanient, the person that brings the coffin will take it there for a thrifle. I wondher he's not here by this; but I'm sure he had no coffin made, an' it takes some time to put wan together."

"Oonagh, *asthore machree!* you're worth your weight in gould," he exclaimed in amazement. "You think ov everything, an' ov every wan but yourself. It was God, sure, that dhruv you in the dure to us."

"Ah! but I didn't come in time. If I only came a couple ov days sooner, I might be able to do something for *her*. But there's no use now in lookin' behind us; what we must do, is to make the best fight we can, an' lave the rest in the hands ov God."

For a few hours, those two mourners—true mourners they were indeed!—sat together in that wretched cabin, watching the remains of their beloved dead. In the afternoon a cart containing the coffin arrived, and with the driver was the little boy to

claim his sixpence. It was a very cheap coffin of deal, with a little yellow ochre smeared roughly over it by way of paint. But if it had been made of oak, and silver-mounted, and lined with white satin, the corpse could not be laid into it with more reverent and gentle hands, nor be bedewed with more bitter tears. Oonagh put her own shawl round it as a substitute for a shroud, and making a pillow of the cleanest straw she could find, she laid the head down on it very softly. Then kissing the cold blue lips for the last time, she drew the corner of the shawl over the poor dead face, and made a sign to the man to nail down the lid.

The graveyard was very near, and a pauper funeral is generally got through in an expeditious manner, so that it was over in less than an hour. Then Oonagh told the widower, who seemed perfectly dazed with trouble, that he should come with her to the next town, and not again go back to the cabin. On arriving, her first care was to bring him—for he was too ill and helpless to do anything for himself—to a pawn-office, and have him fitted there in a suit of tolerably decent clothes. Then she bought a hat, and shoes and stockings; all of which she got surprisingly cheap, for the place was full of such things that would never be redeemed, as they who had pledged them were dead,

or had left the country. Having seen Dick fitted in this suit of second-hand clothing, and taken care that he should wash and shave himself, Oonagh was agreeably surprised to see what a vast improvement was effected in his appearance by such simple proceedings.

Next morning after breakfast, Oonagh made out a carter who was going in the direction of the place where Dick's aunt lived, and this man, when made aware of all the circumstances, offered to take him in his cart to the very door of the house, and when she offered him a trifle for his trouble, the honest fellow refused point-blank to take even a penny. She helped Dick into the cart, and though she tried to look cheerful, and speak words of hope and comfort at the last, her eyes were full of tears, and her voice trembled a little.

"An' now, Dick, mind that you get some wan to write me a line just to say that you got safe to your journey's ind, though I'm not a bit in dhread but this honest boy will take all the care in life ov you. An' I'll call here at the post-office every day for the letther, so be sure you don't forget to sind it. I'll write to your brother to-morra, plase goodness; you can lave it to me, as you can't write yourself, an' my hand to you I'll put it strong to

him. I'm very sure he'll sind me a letther wid money in it in the coorse ov a couple ov months, an' you may swear your davy, that I won't let much grass grow under my feet till I bring it to you. An' now, Dick, *aroon*, good-bye, an' good luck, an' take care of yourself, an' thry to get strong an' well, so as to be ready to start as soon as the money comes from America."

The poor fellow wrung her hand, but he could not speak a word. As he said afterwards, "there was a big lump in my throat that a'most choked me, whin I tried to spake to her." The carter gave the reins a jerk, smacked his whip, and they were off. They had gone a few yards when she ran after them, and thrusting a shilling into the driver's hand said: "Though you wouldn't take anything for your trouble, you won't refuse the price ov a little thrate for him an' yourself at Simon Doolin's public-house at the four cross-roads. Faix, ye'll both ov ye want it by the time ye come to it, for it's a good seven miles off if it is a perch. I was very near forgettin' that; faix, I think I'll be forgettin' my own name soon wid the heighth ov throuble an' sorra."

The very next day, true to her promise, she wrote to Dick's brother in America, telling him the "plain unvarnished tale" of the poor fellow's losses and

sufferings, concluding by entreating him in the most urgent manner to send her the means, as soon as he could spare it, to pay Dick's passage out to him. To make use of her own words, she "put it strong," although in truth her simple narrative could not exceed the actual truth, or even come up to it. When she had posted this important letter with her own hand, she went about on her own business as usual, waiting for the reply to her letter with the utmost anxiety and impatience. Not that she was in the least afraid that the man's heart would be closed to her appeal; that was the last thought that could occur to her. The vast amount of money sent during the famine years by the Irish abroad to their poor friends at home, proves, beyond all doubt, the strength of their family affection, and the intense sympathy with which they regarded the old land in the fearful shadow that had fallen on it. It was indeed a very touching and beautiful trait in the character of those poor exiles! They had brought the warmth of their hearts, and the bright light of family love, into the city of refuge to which they had fled, and neither time nor distance could chill the one, or blunt the sensibility of the other!

What Oonagh was really afraid of, was that her letter might miscarry, or that Dick's brother might

be dead, or that some other unfortunate casualty might happen; but she never for a moment doubted receiving a favourable reply to her letter, provided only that it came safely to hand.

It came even sooner than she expected, and contained a cheque on the nearest bank for twenty pounds to pay Dick's passage to New Orleans, at which port his brother would meet him, on the arrival of the ship. She lost not a moment in bringing him this welcome letter—she would not entrust it to any messenger—and was both surprised and pleased to see the great improvement that had taken place in him, even in so short a time. He had got back a little of his old strength, and was not altogether the gaunt skeleton he had been when last she had seen him. But the expression of his face was very sad, and his manner so subdued, that it would be hard now to realise the fact that he had once been known as "Mad Dick Considine!" The terrible experience of the past few years had broken his spirit completely, or as his aunt expressed it, "taken all the fun an' frolic out ov him;" and the memory of his young wife and her baby dying of want before his eyes, had thrown a dark shade over his life that nothing could ever brighten or dispel.

Dick's aunt, who was very grateful to Oonagh for

all her kindness to him, made her stay with them for a few days, and bought from her a great part of the contents of her basket; she also gave her as a present a good new shawl to replace the old one that she had wrapped round the corpse of poor Judy, when she was putting it into the coffin. She was but a struggling woman, and could do no more to show the gratitude she felt. Dick wanted to pay her what she had laid out for the coffin, and his own clothes, out of the twenty pounds, but she refused to take it from him.

"No, Dick, you can't spare it now; wait till you're some time in America, an' have money *galore*, an' then you can sind it to me, an' I'll be glad to get it in regard ov little Johnny. I'm not in dhread ov that thrifle at all, an' there's no hurry in life about it. Money is always in saison whatever time it comes."

"But, Oonagh, *'a rá gál*, I may be lost on the passage out, or I may die in America before I can airn anything."

"Well, I'll be more sorry for that, than for the money, if it was twinty times as much, an' I'll never give a thought to it. But all the same, Dick, my man, I'm sure ov that money; just as sure as if it was lyin' this minit on the palm ov my hand."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROSPECT BRIGHTENS.

> Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer.
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

IT must not be supposed all this time that Oonagh either forgot, or was forgotten by her foster-sister, "Miss Grace." When in the neighbourhood of Father O'Rafferty's house, she never omitted the opportunity of spending a day or a night there, where she was sure of receiving a warm welcome, not only from Miss Dillon, but from Father John also. The good priest had long felt the greatest respect and admiration for a character such as hers; so humble, and at the same time so independent; so shrewd and hard-working, yet so honest and unselfish. Whenever, by great labour and self-denial, she was able to put a pound together, she brought it to him to keep for her, as she was afraid of being robbed, if she

kept it on her person, and not having any settled home, she had no hiding-place in which she could stow away her money. The priest was too wise, as well as too conscientious, to let her little savings lie unfruitful in his hands; he lodged them, according as she gave them to him, in one of the local banks, where they were bearing interest—not much, indeed, but what in time became a very respectable addition to the original deposit. By the help of fresh additions constantly made to the little hoard, as well as the interest and compound interest always arising, it became a considerable sum of money in some time. He did not tell her of this, as he wished to give her a pleasant surprise. There was so little joy in her hard life, that he felt quite pleased to think how happy she would be, when she knew that a sum of money—a very large one for poor Oonagh—was lying in the bank to her credit.

One holy-day evening, on returning from singing vespers in his chapel, he heard in the hall that Oonagh MacDermott had arrived, and was taking tea in the parlour with Grace.

On entering the parlour, he found Oonagh divested of her travelling gear, and sitting to the table, where Grace was presiding, and heaping her visitor's plate with bread and butter, to which was added some cold

meat that was left after the early dinner. Tea had just been made, and would be fit to drink when the cold meat had been disposed of. It was a homely picture, but a very pleasant one! The high-born delicate-looking lady, ministering with affectionate solicitude to the wants of her humble friend; the table plain, but very neat, and plentifully spread with good country fare, and in the grate a blazing fire, before which Bran, now grown old, was stretching his limbs in careless ease. Oonagh made good use of the luxurious food before her, with the wholesome appetite of one blest with perfect health, and with whom good things were not usually found in her ordinary bill of fare. When she saw the priest she stood up, and made her usual low curtsey.

"Sit down again, Oonagh, sit down, my good girl," he said, shaking her kindly by the hand. "I won't speak to you unless you go on eating, and that heartily too, for I suppose you have put a good deal of ground under your feet, since you heard mass this morning."

"Pretty fair, your reverence. I got the last mass in the Ballycross chapel, an' then came on here."

"That's ten miles, Oonagh, if it's a perch."

"So it is, sir, but you see I'm so used to be

on my feet, that I don't think that a great walk at all."

"Did you eat nothing since breakfast?"

"No, sir, but you see I'm used to that, too. Sure it isn't every day I get such a good dinner as this," and with a smile she pointed to the plate before her.

"I think, my dear Miss Grace, that there are some mutton chops in the house," he said rather dubiously. "I sent them home myself on the day before yesterday. Could you desire Bridget to put one of them on the gridiron? It would be done in a few minutes, and you know that poor Oonagh does not get a mutton chop for her dinner every day."

"Don't you remember that we had the chops for dinner on yesterday?" replied Grace, laughing at his look of blank disappointment. "But you need not be uneasy about Oonagh. She and I have had a grand meat tea, and plenty of home-made bread and butter."

"I had full an' plinty ov all sorts ov good things, before you came in," said Oonagh. "Miss Grace took good care ov me, as she does always. I couldn't take anything more, indeed. May God increase comfort an' plinty to both you an' her!"

When tea was over, Oonagh drew a little bag from her bosom, and took from it this time, not one pound, but three. There was also some loose silver, but this she put back into the bag.

"I have three pound notes for your reverence this time," she said, with a bright smile on her face and a glad light shining out of her soft gray eyes.

"Why, Oonagh, this is a pleasant surprise you have for me. How did you manage to have so much just now?"

"Well, sir, the times is mendin' at last, an' the people is not as badly off as they used to be, thank God! The country girls have a few shillings to spare now an' thin, an' they thrate themselves to a silk handkercher, or a bit ov lace for their caps, or a new ribbon, when I have any that plases their fancy. Sure 'tis a new day wid the people when they're able to lay out a little money wanst more on their clothes. An' whenever I make a shillin', I do my livin' best to put another on top ov that, an' you see, sir, that's the way I'm able to put the pounds together so regular."

"Very logically put indeed. Why, Oonagh, you will be a rich woman, one of these days."

"Wisha, sir, you're welcome to your joke. Rich,

inagh! Och mavroon! that's what I never will be durin' duration."

"I'm not so sure of that. Stay a moment, and I'll give you as pleasant a surprise as you gave me just now."

He went to his writing-desk, that was on a side-table, and taking from it a bank receipt, put it into her hand.

"Now, Oonagh, what do you say to that? Is not that a very pleasant surprise I have for you?"

"I don't rightly undherstand you, sir."

"Well, you won't be long so. If you look at that bit of paper, you will understand it. It is a bank receipt for fifty pounds that is lodged for your credit. The interest is not much yet, on so small a sum, but it will be growing, it will be growing."

He put his forefinger on the figures of each entry, and the dates of the lodgments attached to them. Her hand trembled so that she could not hold the paper, and she said in a faint voice: "I can't rightly see it, sir. I think the sight is lavin' me."

"There is no hurry, my poor girl; the evening is long, and we can go over it all at our leisure."

"It is all right, dear Oonagh," said the sweet, sympathetic voice of Grace. "You are really and truly the happy possessor of all that money, made by

your own honest hard work and self-denial. Don't you understand, dear?"

"Well, hardly, miss. I know that I gave Father John here a thrifle now an' agin to keep for me safe, but I never thought it could come up to all this money."

"It will be mounting up still more every year," said the priest. "You are getting a little interest, which will be always added on to the original sum, and bear interest in its turn. Do you comprehend?"

"Partly, your reverence."

"You see, you will always be bringing me more money to add to this nice little nest-egg, and you won't know where you are, until it mounts up to something handsome, that will astonish you. So you see that I was *not* joking, when I said you would be a rich woman one of those days."

Oonagh was by this time actually crying. The joy and the surprise had been too much for her, although as a general rule she was "unused to the melting mood," and was by no means troubled by what fashionable people call "nerves."

"'Tis for joy I'm cryin', Miss Grace. I can't help it, your reverence," she cried apologetically. "But sure 'tis all o' 'count ov little Johnny. I never can think ov him wearin' the holy vestments, an' standin'

on the althar sayin' mass, that the tears don't come into my eyes, whether I like it or no."

"Oh, Johnny is all right; there is no fear of him."

"There is not, father, with the help of God."

"By this time he is old enough to go to a classical school, and I must see to that for you. There is a friend of mine, and under some obligations to me, keeping a good school in the town. He will take Johnny into his house as a boarder, for a mere trifle, to oblige me."

This assertion of the priest's was very much of a pious fraud, as he intended paying half the money for the child's board and education at this school, and let Oonagh pay the other half, thinking at the same time that she was paying all of it. He remembered that once on a time, he was an orphan like little Johnny, as desolate and poor, and like him, would never have been a priest, or worn "the robes," only that a kind hand had been held out to him. As an offering of thanksgiving for the great charity shown to himself, he was determined to have a share in a similar charitable work for another who was in the same predicament, and had no one to help him to fight the battle of life, but one poor, humble, hard-working woman.

She was pouring out her thanks, almost incoherent from emotion, when he interrupted her good-humouredly.

"Now I must be off to my room to read my office, not a word of which I have looked at this blessed day. You and Miss Grace can have your chat without the old man; I am sure ye have lots to say to each other about the news, and the latest fashions," and laughing at his own simple joke, the good father went off to his own room.

"May God bless, an' keep all the hurt an' harm ov the year from him!" said Oonagh, when he was gone.

"I say amen to that prayer, with all my heart!" said Grace Dillon.

When the two young women were alone again, they looked at each other with curious searching eyes.

"Where is all your beauty gone to, Oonagh?" said Grace.

"The rain an' wind ov winther, an' the sun ov summer, took it all away wid 'em," replied Oonagh with a merry laugh, "an' good security they are for doin' the like, I'll go bail. Why, thin, the sorra take it for beauty! What good is it at all? an' it don't last any time."

The winter wind and summer sun had indeed

changed Oonagh, and robbed her of much of that beauty for which in her youth she had been so remarkable. Her skin had got tanned and weather-beaten, from constant exposure to the weather; her figure had lost the soft, graceful curves of early womanhood, and become angular and spare, from abstinence and exercise. But there were some points in Oonagh that neither time nor hardship could deprive of their charm. The blue-gray Irish eyes, shaded by their long black lashes, had their old calm, fearless expression, and her mouth, with the well-cut, flexible lips, and pleasant smile, had all its old grave sweetness. Nothing could change those glorious eyes, or take away the beauty of the sweet, sensitive mouth.

There was a very great change too in Grace, which Oonagh could not fail to see, though she was much too timid to make any allusion to it. Trouble of mind, and illness of body, had done for her what sun, and wind, and hard work had done for her foster-sister. Unlike the humble peasant-girl, she had never been handsome or healthy, and her natural delicacy of constitution, inherited from a consumptive mother, was making itself every day more dangerously apparent. But Oonagh, though it made her heart ache to see the hectic cheeks, the hollow temples, the

wasted figure, could not bear to speak of the sad alteration she saw in her beloved Miss Grace.

"You have a very hard, cheerless life, my poor Oonagh!" said the young lady, pressing Oonagh's brown hand between her own, that were so white and thin, and looking still more so from the contrast.

"Oyeh, no, miss. I'm used to it now, an' I don't mind it. I'm doin' for little Johnny, as well as for myself, an' that makes everything come aisy to me. An' more than all, an' betther than all, there's fifty pound in the bank, waitin' for him," and she burst into one of her old joyous laughs.

"You never think of yourself at all, Oonagh, I do believe. It is Johnny you think of, and nothing but Johnny."

"Eyeh! what do I want now but a bit an' sup, an' sixpence to pay for my lodging at night, when I'm in a sthrange place, far away from the ould nabors that would give it to me, an' a *cead millia falthagh* along wid it? Oh, Miss Grace, jewil! if I wanst saw Johnny sayin' mass wid the vestments on him, I'd never give a thought to the cold, an' hunger, an' hardship, if they wor tin times as much."

"All in good time, Oonagh. Keep up your heart, for I'm quite sure you will live to see that happy day.

God is too good and just to refuse you the prayer of your whole life, and the reward of all your patience and devotion. I shall not live to see it, but you surely will. It is borne in on me, that He will never send for you, until He first grants to you your heart's great desire."

"Well, miss, I hope so; but half the good will be taken out ov it, if you aren't to the fore, to see it as well as me. You'll be as glad a'most yourself as what I'll be."

After a little Miss Dillon retired to her bedroom, for the bad state of her health made early hours absolutely compulsory on her. But before she left the parlour, Oonagh said:

"I was longin', miss, to ax you if you had any letther ov late from Masther Hy'cinth; but in dhread it might be bad news, I didn't like mentionin' it."

"He writes regularly, Oonagh, and there is no bad news in his letters, I am happy to say. He is in good health, and though he has not made his fortune yet, he is in good heart as well as health, and in his last letter, he says he hopes to come home a rich man in a few years."

"They won't be long passin' over, miss, an' thin you'll have him back agin, an' ye'll both be as

happy as the day is long, plase God! Oh, won't it be the joyful day when Masther Hy'cinth comes back agin to Castle Cloyne!"

"Yes, Oonagh, a very joyful day indeed; but when it comes, I shall not be there to see it."

CHAPTER V.

THE DEATH OF BRAN.

Now day may break, and bugle sound,
And whoop and hollo ring around,
And o'er his couch the stag may bound,
But Keeldar sleeps for ever.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

AT the end of a year from the time that Dick Considine went to America, Oonagh received a letter from him, or rather written by some one in his name, as he could not write himself, though he had in some way managed to read a little. This letter contained a cheque on one of the local banks for ten pounds, and was directed thus: "To Father John O'Rafferty, P.P., Castle Cloyne, Ireland, for Oonagh MacDermott." The letter is given verbatim, spelling and diction, as a specimen of the greater number of letters sent at that time by the Irish abroad, to their friends at home.

"Dear Onagh,

"I hope this letter will find you in good health And sperits, as it laves me in at Present, thanks be to God for the same. i send you in this a check Tin pound, and you are to rite back post haste to say whether You got it or no. dear Oonagh, I never can put out of my Heart how well you behaved to me when i wanted help in my sore distress, and likewise to the poor girl thats Gone, May God reward you for it. Dear onagh, two pounds of this money is to pay you back what you lent me, but Dear onagh I never can pay for all your goodness, but God will pay you, never fear. Three more is to pay for a good tombstone to be put over Poor Judy and her little baby, an' don't forget her name, and age, and the day she died, and above all, Dont forget to say that it was put over her By her lovin' husband. dear Oonagh. When people reads whats wrote on that tomestone, they will never know that my poor Girl that come of a good dacent Stock, dyed of cold and hunger. If i had Her now, she and her child would have full and Plinty out here, but That wasn't Gods will. Dear Onagh, you are to buy yourself a shuit of Warm close comin on the winther, and then the rest is to help you with little Johnnys schoolin. be the time he's

fit to go to college, more will be sent from whence this comes. My Brother jack met me on the quay, and brought me home to his place in the country, a very long way off. he has a good farm of land and is doin well, an has a fine set of boys an girls growin' up to be a help to him. I'm doin Well myself, and in constant work, an' gettin good wages, thanks Be to God for it. Dont be backward in takin' the Thrifle I send you, for I airn more in wan day here, than I would for a Week at home Dear onagh, tell Johnny that I sind him my blessin', and tell him that I hope when he's priested, that he'll say a Mass for poor judy, and Another for myself. Jack's Wife is a fine *flahoolagh* woman, and an Irishwoman like himself. Give my Love to father o'Rafferty, and to my Aunt, and all her family, and remimber me to all inquirin' frinds. So no more at present from yours to command,

"RICHARD CONSIDINE."

Oonagh was quite delighted with this erudite epistle. To her simple, unlettered mind, it appeared all that a letter ought to be. Every friend was remembered, nothing was forgotten, and in all respects it was most satisfactory. She lost no time in carrying out Dick's instructions respecting the

tombstone for poor Judy's grave, and when it was erected, no one who saw it could ever imagine that they who slept beneath it were the victims of famine. Oonagh was never tired of sounding Dick's praises, and she showed his letter to so many people, and sent it to so many places, that at last it was worn to tatters, and could no longer be deciphered. She bought a warm cloak for herself, out of the money that was left after paying for the tombstone, as she thought it would be dishonest if she did not comply exactly with the wishes of the donor. The remainder she gave to the priest, to add to her other savings, which by this time had mounted up to a sum that to poor Oonagh seemed bewildering in its magnitude.

But the sky of Oonagh's prosperity was not to be always without a cloud. Dark days were in store for her, as they are for all the human family in a greater or lesser degree, and her brave heart was to be once more sorely tried.

In the course of a very wet autumn, Oonagh got a bad cold, which she found hard to shake off, notwithstanding her robust health, and hardy habits of life. But she did not lay herself up, or relax in her appointed work. On one particular morning, however, she felt so ill that she was tempted to remain in the house where she had spent the previous

night, and try what a day's rest and a little care would do for her; but when she saw a bright, clear sky overhead, and every appearance of fine weather, she rejected the temptation, and with her basket on her arm set off, with her inseparable companion the dog, trotting beside her. The country through which she now travelled was bleak and wild, and but thinly populated. Where houses had once stood, were now but heaps of stones and rubbish, the handiwork of the Sheriff and his officers, or as they were called by the country people, "The crow-bar brigade!" The lands through which she passed were for the most part only half-cultivated, and in many places were mere wastes, for when the former tenants had been ejected, or had emigrated, few persons could be found bold enough, or solvent enough, to encounter the enormous amount of poor's-rate that should be paid on them, to say nothing of rent, and the usual county taxes. There were few cattle on the fields, few haggards of corn and hay for the coming winter, and few signs of human habitation. The famine was all over, but the sad traces of it were not easily effaced!

She plodded on, very sick and weary, but hoping to come to a house where she could get shelter, for the afternoon had given the lie to the fair promise

of the morning, and had become bitterly cold, with occasional showers of rain and sleet; but no house met her longing eyes, and she got so tired that it was with difficulty she could carry the large, heavy basket. But at a particularly bleak and lonely part of the road, the rain came down, not in occasional showers as it had hitherto done, but in a steady, continuous downpour. Before long she was drenched to the very skin, and her clothes became so sodden with water that she found them very heavy; but her sad plight grew worse and worse every moment, as the rain came down pitilessly in perfect sheets of water. However, there was nothing for it but to stumble on as well as she could, until she could reach some place of shelter, and be able to dry her dripping garments. But she came to no house, for her progress was very slow, and still the rain came down in the steady, continuous stream peculiar to the South and West of Ireland. They were indeed a very forlorn, miserable-looking pair, Oonagh and her poor old dog, who followed close at her heels, with head and tail drooping in dumb, patient misery, while the water ran down his coat in streams. Bran and his mistress had been long together, and shared the inclemency of many a winter's day, but this was the most

wretched they had ever known since they first "took to the road" as partners in the hard battle of life.

At last, when the short autumn day was coming to a close, and darkness was settling down on as dreary and desolate a scene as could well be imagined, Oonagh, to her great joy, saw smoke issuing from the chimney of a rather decent house not far from the road. Animated with fresh courage by the pleasing prospect of warmth and shelter, she quickened her pace, and was soon at the door of the house, which to her surprise she found not alone latched, but bolted on the inside. She knocked gently, but receiving no answer, did so again more loudly than before.

Soon she heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and then the door was opened, not widely, as is the custom in Irish rural districts, but only just as much as enabled her to see the pale, careworn face of an elderly woman, who had all the appearance of having been crying very recently.

"What do you want?" she said, without, however, making way for the new-comer to enter, although the rain was pouring down in torrents.

"I'm a thravellin' woman," replied Oonagh, "that was overtaken by the rain airly in the evenin', an'

I'm fairly soaked wid wet, an' far from well besides. I'd be thankful to get a bed for the night, an' lave to dhry my clothes by the kitchen fire."

"I have no bed, an' you can't come in," said the woman, not in an unkind way, but as if she was performing some unpleasant task.

"I'm no beggar, but a dacent woman," persisted Oonagh, "an' I always pay my way in raison, wherever I go."

"'Tisn't that I begridge a morsel ov food an' the shelther ov the roof to any poor thraveller, such a dreadful night as this," said the woman, "God forbid! But, honest woman, I'm doin' it for your own sake. The sickness is in the house wid me for the last three weeks, an' now no one undher the roof is able to stand on his feet but myself, an' how long I may be able to do it, God only knows. My only boy is lyin' dead in that room beyant, an' his father is so bad that I'm in dhread he won't get over the night. The dispinsary docther says 'tis the worst sort ov faver he ever knew, along wid bein' the most takin', an' when my servant girl hard him sayin' that, she run away from me as if there was fire in her skin. You may be willin', honest woman, to chance it, but I wouldn't have it on my conscience to let you do it, without tellin' you. There's enough dyin' an' dead here

without any more; but if you like to come in afther gettin' the warnin', sure you can thry it."

"I thank you kindly, missis, but I'm thinkin' that I'll take your advice, an' not face the sickness. I don't care about the faver for myself, but I have a child depindin' on me, an' for his sake I must keep myself on my feet as long as I can. If anything was to happen to me, it would be a sore story wid him. Do you persave?"

"Yes. For his sake, then, don't come in here. I don't like to let you go, for all that, for the next house is a mile away, an' you'd be fairly dhrownded before you could reach it. But if you'd be satisfied wid that house beyant, there's plinty ov hay in it, an' you'd be snug enough there, only for the wet clothes."

"Eyeh! I don't mind that at all; I'm well used to get a good wettin'. I'll be well enough in the cow-house, an' if you sell me a loaf ov bread, an' a quart ov milk, I'll be thankful to you."

"The cow was sold a week ago, but I have the milk ov a goat, an' I'll divide that wid you an' welcome. But as for payment, I'll be poorer than what I am, before I'd take the like from a poor thravellin' woman. I have only a little bread, but you can have it all, for I couldn't ate it myself. I think a morsel ov food

would choke me." Here her composure, which had evidently been only assumed, forsook her, and the wretched woman flung her hands over her head with a low, bitter cry that could no longer be repressed.

"Have you any wan at all wid you?" asked Oonagh, whose kind heart was touched by such terrible distress, "for if you haven't, I'd go in, an' stop wid you in the name ov God. Sure, He's aiquil to take care ov me here, as well as in any other place."

"I have my poor ould mother wid me. When she hard ov my great trouble she came to me, an' though I wanted her to go away agin, she wouldn't do it. No wan can do me any good now, *foreer!* but the great God."

"Well, as you have your mother wid you, I won't run in danger, for Johnny's sake. But I'd be glad to get some ov the bread an' milk, as you say you can spare them."

The woman went back into the house, and soon returned with some bread, and a little jug of goat's milk.

"I brought you half ov what I had," she said, "the other half I kept for my mother's breakfast in the mornin', for 'twill be late before the baker's messenger comes from the town. An' now the

sooner you can get out of the rain, the betther for you."

Oonagh was not slow to take her advice, and went off to the cow-house, where to her great joy she found plenty of good dry hay. She thought herself in Paradise when she found herself under shelter from the pouring rain, with a good bed of hay to sleep on. As usual, she divided her frugal supper with her four-footed friend, and then covering herself well with hay, she said her prayers, and soon fell asleep.

When she awoke next morning, it was with a feeling of deadly sickness, such as she had never before experienced in the course of her healthy life. She was shivering from head to foot; she had a racking headache, grievous pains in all her bones, and a general sense of nausea and feverish unrest. She lay back in the hay for a few moments, trying to recollect herself, and think what it was that had made her so ill. She did not at all recognise the true nature of her illness, which was due to the imprudence of having slept all night in clothes that had been thoroughly saturated by the heavy rains of the previous day, and that, too, when she was suffering from the effects of a neglected cold. She jumped to the conclusion that her illness was typhus fever, contracted by her visit to the house infected by it.

Typhus fever, or as they emphatically call it, "the sickness," is a word of terror to the Irish peasantry, because they have been periodically greatly scourged by it. It is, in fact, the only disease that they are really afraid of. When Oonagh thought that she had got "the sickness," a feeling of dismay came over her so great as almost to deprive her of consciousness. What — she said to herself — was to become of her in that strange and lonely place, far from all human care and kindness, with no one within miles of her but two afflicted poor women, who were complete strangers, and had, besides, care and trouble enough of their own. By this time, probably, they had altogether forgotten that such as she was in existence at all. Like some poor, dumb creature that has been grievously hurt, and creeps into a lonely corner to die unseen, she feared she would die in that wretched place, without doctor or priest, or any living thing but her poor dog beside her. Bran sat upon his haunches, looking into her face with that wistful, earnest gaze in his dark eyes that gives to all his race an almost human expression. He saw that she was in some trouble, though he could not divine what it was, and he whined mournfully, and licked her burning hand, as if to show her that she was not altogether alone.

But the feeling of terror, that had for a few moments almost paralysed her, did not last long, and with her usual energy and good sense, she set herself to consider what was best to be done, while she still was left the power of thinking and acting. Always self-reliant, she felt that in this sore strait she must depend on herself alone, and also, that whatever was to be done should be done at once, while she had any strength or consciousness left to her. With Oonagh, to resolve was to act, and rising, she shook out her clothes, which were still very damp, free from all the particles of hay that adhered to them, and after a short time spent in her morning prayer, she took up her basket and left the cabin. She knew that a good large town was within five miles of her, and ill as she was, she hoped to be able to walk that distance in something like three hours. If she could only reach that town all would be well with her, for she had a friend there, at whose house she lodged whenever she passed that way, and from whom she was sure of receiving every care and attention during her illness. This thought encouraged her to exert herself, and for a short time she walked on slowly, but still making fair way.

But though the spirit was willing, the flesh was

weak, and Oonagh was soon compelled, sorely against her will, to slacken her pace. The weight of the heavy basket was too much for her, yet she struggled on with it, for it contained her whole stock-in-trade, and consequently was of great value in her eyes. She was weak too from want of food, as well as debilitated from illness, and by-and-by, instead of walking, she could only creep along, faint, weary, and racked with pain. The weather was very fine, notwithstanding all the rain of the preceding day. The sun had risen high in a sky without a cloud, showing her that the day was far advanced, though she had accomplished but half her journey. After some time, overpowered by illness and fatigue, she was obliged to stop, and sit down to rest on a large stone at the side of the road.

At the end of half-an-hour she found that sitting in the full blaze of the noon-day sun did not serve at all to mend matters, and that she was not better, but on the contrary was getting every moment more ill. She rose up again wearily, and resuming her basket, continued on her way. Slowly and painfully she toiled on, until at last she approached the town. But though the goal was almost in view, she was not destined to reach it, bravely as she had struggled for it. A sudden giddiness seized her, a sharp pain shot through her

whole being, the earth, as it were, slipped from under her, and with a low moan of agony, she reeled and fell.

True to his marvellous instinct, and to the training he had received from her, the dog placed himself beside the basket, to guard it from all strangers and trespassers, who might be tempted to meddle with its contents. He remained there very patiently, wondering doubtless in his doggish mind, why it was that his mistress lay so silent and prostrate, and feeling very hungry, for he had got no breakfast that morning, and very little for supper the night before. But still this faithful sentinel never thought of deserting his post, but sat quietly on his haunches, watching his mistress, and the basket which he knew was his own special charge.

By-and-by a farmer's cart, with two men sitting in it, came up to this forlorn little group. They came on at a moderate pace, and were evidently returning from market.

"Hullo! there is some game or other going on here," cried one of the men, jumping from the cart. "Here's a woman dead drunk. Begor! she began it airly in the day, to be so far gone as this, an' it only two o'clock now."

The other man, who was the owner of the cart,

got down also, and after looking at Oonagh said in a troubled voice: "I know this poor woman well, an' I tell you now, Bartle, that she's no more drunk than what we are ourselves. I could a'most take my oath that she never took a glass ov sperrits nate, in all her life. 'Tis Oonagh MacDermott, the dalin' woman, an' as sober an' honest a poor woman as ever broke the bread of life."

"You seem to know her, Tom?"

"Fake an' sure I do, an' good cause I have; an' I know nothing ov her but what's dacent to the backbone. She is the woman that put Dick Considine's wife into the coffin, an' paid for it out ov her own airnin's, into the bargain. If I was discoorsin' wid you for a month ov Sundays, I never could tell half her goodness to that poor boy an' his wife, when none ov their own people knew how it was wid 'em. My wife is Dick's aunt, you persave, so I ought to know the whole story. Whatever else it is that ails Oonagh, you may take your davy, Bartle, that it isn't in licker she is."

"Faix, may be so; you know best. But why is she lyin' here by the roadside in that state, an' in broad daylight?"

"She must be sick, Bartle; she has taken the sickness, as sure as a gun."

"The Lord save us! An' what are we to do wid her, Tom?"

"'Tis aisy settled. The cart is here quite convanient, you persave, an' all we have to do is lift her in, an' bring her on another half-mile to the poor-house infirmary. I'd bring her on to my own place, dear knows, an' a hearty welcome she'd get from the woman ov the house, as is well due to her, but my place is too far away, an' we have no docthor convanient. I know the docthor ov the poor-house here, an' a nice civil-spoken man he is, as you'd meet in a day's walk, an' when I tell him that she's Oonagh, the dalin' woman, an' a great frind ov my own, he'll take the best ov care ov her, I'll go bail."

"Does that dog belong to her?"

"Erra, to be sure he do. Poor Bran is as well known all along the road as what she is herself, an' the same shaver is as cute as a pet fox. He knows me right well, for many's the time I gave him his supper, when the pair ov 'em would rowl in to us for a night's lodgin'."

"An' what will you do wid him?"

"I can't do anything but lave him here mindin' the basket, till we come back from the poor-house, an' then I'll bring the basket, an' himself, home wid

me. The youngsthers will be glad to see the poor fellow walkin' in to 'em, an' take good care ov him. Herself will be the wan to take care ov the basket, never fear, for she's very thankful to Oonagh. An' 'tis she that will be heart sorry when she hears that the poor girl is in the poor-house, down wid the sickness."

"Begorra, you have settled it all finely."

"But we're losin' time, man alive!" cried Tom. "Come, bear a hand, an' help me to rise her into the cart. Aisy, aisy, I tell you. Well, that was nately done. Now, we'll cover her wid my ould loody, an' lay a handkercher over her face, to keep off the sun."

When Oonagh was laid in the cart, with a bundle of hay under her head, the two men were ready to walk beside it. But before setting off, Tom Whelan turned towards the dog, and said in what he meant to be a very solemn and impressive injunction :

"Now, Bran, my good fella, you're to take good care ov that basket till I come back agin, an' I won't let the grass grow undher my feet, I can tell you."

As if the intelligent creature had recognised a friend who had come to help his mistress in her sore need, and fully comprehended the charge that was

entrusted to him, he wagged his tail, and settled himself firmly on his haunches beside the basket.

"That fella is mighty knowin', or else his looks belies him," observed Whelan's companion.

"Sorra lie in that. Bran is game to the backbone, an' he'd let himself be cut in pieces sooner than he'd sell the pass. You might dipind your life on that dog. Poor Oonagh taught him to mind the basket for her, an' I'll go bail that he'll do it handsomely."

They set off, walking slowly beside the cart. The dog looked after them wistfully, as if he knew they were taking his beloved mistress from him; but still he remained at his post beside the basket, watchful and patient.

The men with the cart were not long out of sight when a glad shout rang out on the air, and a crowd of boys of all ages, just released for the day from the National School, which was quite near, rushed out on the road pell-mell. They scampered along, shouting, screaming, and making all the noise that schoolboys think is absolutely necessary to celebrate the joyful hour of their daily enfranchisement. As soon as they came to where Bran sat guarding his charge, they all came to a full stop, and there was not one among them who did not view the treasures contained in that basket with greedy and covetous eyes. Treasures indeed

were there, that made their young hearts pant to acquire, and their wistful eyes glisten even to behold. There were picture-books, gaudy in bright colours, tin trumpets, whistles, marbles, and many other things that were very beautiful in their eyes, and which, though they had often longed for, they had never been able to call their own. They formed a circle round the dog, although at first at a respectful distance, which they lessened gradually, and he began to growl, for his instinct told him that the new-comers were not there with any friendly intentions.

"'Tis the dalin' woman's basket," cried one of the boys, "an' by Goxty 'tis her dog, too."

"But where is the dalin' woman herself?" asked another.

"Yarra, what matther where she is! She's not to the fore, anyhow, an' oh, crikey! wouldn't it be a fine lark if we could get some ov her things before she comes back! Sure, she'd never miss them."

"She might, an' likewise she mightn't, but if she do itself, who's to tell her who took 'em? Boys, I hard people that knows it sayin', that dalin' woman has a crock ov goold berrid down in the ground, an' that she has five hundher pound in bank along wid it. Sorra harm it would be to take a little out ov her basket, as we have the chance."

Encouraged by this honest advice, the young brigands came nearer to the basket, and one of them, more daring than his fellows, snatched a picture-book out of it, and instantly the dog sprang up and leaped at his throat.

I have often wondered why it is that of all human kind schoolboys are so cruel in their instincts, and so savage in their actions. They are cruel with a cruelty peculiarly their own, and their delight is to inflict pain on every creature that is weaker and more helpless than themselves, and that can be tormented with impunity. This is a problem that has often puzzled me, and a fact for which I can give no adequate reason, but a fact it is, nevertheless, and a very hard and stubborn fact it is, too. If the average schoolboy were to carry his savage instincts into a more advanced period of his life, the friends of humanity would be sadly outnumbered, and the animal creation would be exterminated off the face of the earth. Fortunately, however, this is not so. The cruel schoolboy puts aside his cruelty with his books, and, in nine cases out of ten, becomes merciful to the animal creation, and gentle to those who are weak and helpless; and he learns to think that the wanton infliction of pain is not only an exhibition of brutal vice, but of vice as vulgar and mean as it is brutal.

But just now the schoolboy instinct was in full swing, unchecked by any restraining authority, and incited to show itself in its worst aspect by the opposition that was made by the dog. Here was a legitimate object on which they could exercise their love of bullying, and of which they could make sport. It would be pleasant to divide the contents of the basket among themselves, but it would be still pleasanter to worry the poor, devoted guardian, and see what fight could be got out of him. One of those who were behind gave him a tremendous blow on the flank, that compelled him to fall back with a yell of pain, and another following that good example flung a large stone at him, that broke one of his fore-legs, and brought him helpless to the ground. But the heart of the old dog was staunch and true, and he made no attempt to retreat, but cowered down over the basket, with an appealing look in his face that would have melted any heart but that of a schoolboy. Another and a larger stone was now thrown, and it went so true to its mark that it split his forehead open, and his eye hung down over the jaw, a most horrible mass of mingled blood and jelly. Their helpless victim was now completely at their mercy, blind, lame, prostrate; and with a shout of triumph, the young brutes closed in on him in a grand

onslaught, which had at least the good effect of putting the poor, disabled, dying creature more quickly out of its misery.

All honour to thy revered memory, Dick Martin of Connemara! It was thy tender heart and large sympathy that first in a public manner brought into notice the claims of the most helpless of all God's creatures, and made it penal to treat them with great or unnecessary cruelty. It was the work of thy life to ameliorate the sufferings of the animal creation, and place thy final triumph in the sacred cause of humanity on the Imperial statute-book, in the form of what has been ever since popularly called "Dick Martin's Act"! Conquerors and great men have had statues erected to them, and magnificent buildings called by their names, but when both shall have been overthrown, and crumbled into dust, by the unsparing hand of Time, thy monument shall still endure, and thy name be held in honour. As long as the "Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" shall keep its place on the British statute-book—and that shall be for all time—thy good and Christian labours in the interest of humanity, oh, gentle and tender-hearted Irishman, can never be forgotten!

CHAPTER VI.

OONAGH IN THE POOR-HOUSE.

Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed.

BACON.

IT was many weeks before Oonagh was sufficiently recovered from the severe rheumatic fever, which she had contracted by sleeping a whole night in clothes that were sodden with heavy rain. During those weeks, she had endured much bodily pain, as well as great mental distress. She was well cared for in the poor-house infirmary, for the matron there was an old friend of her father's, and the doctor—who had been told her story by Tom Whelan—took a great interest in her case, and attended to her as anxiously and carefully as if he was sure of being paid a large fee when she should be out of his hands.

But with all the care of the doctor, and the kindness of the matron, her recovery was very slow; for

she was sure she was dying, and she did not want to die—at least, not just yet. It was not on her own account she was troubled, for the grim conqueror of all that is earthly had no terrors for her. Her life had been a pure and innocent one, singularly free from sin, except such as all human creatures are liable to commit. From the first dawn of reason her watch-word had always been "Duty," and she had earnestly striven to the best of her lights, to obey its dictates, and to fulfil all that it enjoined on her, to the very letter, and without thinking of the sacrifice, or reckoning up the cost. For her, and for those who are like her, Death has no sting, and when he comes, he brings with him no greater terror than the natural shrinking of poor weak human nature from "darkness and the worm." For herself, then, Oonagh was not afraid to die; her conscience was at peace with itself, and with all men, and her life was not so very happy or comfortable as that she should cling to it, or fear to lose it. But she did not wish to die for Johnny's sake, not just yet. When she thought of what her death meant for him, her heart quailed. If she died, what was to become of him? How was he to be supported, educated, clothed, and sent to college? How short a way on all this what she had saved could go, and if she died that was all he would have. It

would be enough, no doubt, to give him a trade, and maintain and clothe him during the period of his apprenticeship, but it would not be enough to make him a priest. Father O'Rafferty had promised to help her, and would certainly keep his word whether she lived or died, but he too might die, for he was an old man, worn down by much trouble and hardship. And if he were to die, little Johnny's last friend was gone!

Oonagh suffered much in those days, but she was very gentle and patient. She had been practising patience for a long time, and she had, moreover, an unbounded faith in the fatherly care and goodness of God. Beside the love of life that is intuitive to all sentient creatures, she longed most intensely to recover for Johnny's sake, and she determined to do everything in her own power to assist in getting back her health. She scrupulously followed all the doctor's directions, took everything that was ordered for her, no matter how disagreeable it might be, and tried hard to keep her mind as calm and hopeful as possible. The doctor said that he had never had so good a patient, and the nurse in whose ward she was, liked her because she was very quiet, and gave so little trouble. It was a great loss to her, that it was not the workhouse to which Father O'Rafferty

was chaplain that she had been brought to by Tom Whelan, for it would have been a great comfort to her to see him occasionally. But his district was in another direction altogether, and she was obliged to be content with the ministration of a strange priest, who though very kind, could not possibly have the same regard, or sympathy with her, that she would be sure to receive from her own old pastor.

But even the darkest and dreariest night must come to an end at last, and after many weeks of intense suffering, Oonagh began to mend, very slowly and gradually at first, but as time went on, steadily and surely. Out of her great desire to live, life had been begotten. With the return of health and strength, came back the old energy and courage, the old aim always before her eyes, and the old dogged determination to accomplish that aim, in spite of all the difficulty and the hardship that attended it.

Every market-day, honest Tom Whelan came to the poor-house to inquire for her, sometimes alone, and sometimes accompanied by his wife, who had never forgotten Oonagh's kindness to her nephew. As soon as they had ascertained that her illness was not the dreaded typhus, they had asked to be permitted to see her; but while she was very ill, this for many reasons was forbidden. But there came a day

when she was allowed to see them, and thank them for their kind inquiries, of which she had been informed by the nurse. She asked Tom for her dog, and basket of goods, and then he told her with a very cheerful countenance, that the dog and basket were both at his house, and well taken care of by "herself" and the children, a good-natured fiction that could hardly be avoided, or blamed with much severity. He told her, that as soon as she was well enough to be removed, he would come with the cart, and a feather-bed in it, so that she could "thravel fair an' aisy," and bring her home with him to get strong again in the fresh air of the country, and where she could have "lashin's an' lavin's ov new milk, an' fresh eggs, an' everything else that was handy an' convanient."

On the day before she left the infirmary, the good doctor paid her his last visit, and with her whole heart in her swimming eyes, she thanked him for all his care and kindness while she was ill.

"Pray don't speak of it," he replied. "I only did my duty, and what I am paid for doing. If all my other patients were as reasonable and obedient as you were, my office here would be much less disagreeable than it sometimes is."

"The Lord reward you, sir, an' sind you a good *sonuher,* that's in case you haven't got her already."

"Well, I am still a bachelor," he said laughingly, "but all in good time, you know. Perhaps you might get the *sonuher* for me. Are you acquainted with any very nice young lady, who would be satisfied to take a poor workhouse doctor, for better and for worse?"

"Wisha, I am not. I don't know any nice young lady that I'd think was in any way good enough for you, barrin' Miss Dillon ov Castle Cloyne. But she's very delicate in her health, *foreer!* an' it isn't marriage nor bachelors that's throublin' her at all. But," she continued, chiming in with his little joke and pleasant humour, "I'll be on the look-out for your honour, an' who knows what a beautiful fine wife I might be able to make out for you, docthor?"

"That's right; and you will let me know when you find her."

"Fake an' sure I will so. You may dipind your life on me."

"And now, my good girl, I wish to give you a little advice before you go away," he said, more gravely; "you are now quite well again, and require nothing but change of air, and generous diet for some time to come, to help you to get up your strength

once more. But you must take more care of yourself than you have hitherto done. I understand that you are a pedlar, and in the course of your business go through much hardship and privation, out in all weather, and walking great distances. Now, if you value your health, and wish for a long life, you must avoid such great exertion for the future. Your heart is not so strong as it should be, and will not bear any over strain of body, or worry of mind. There is really nothing radically wrong with it," he continued, seeing the scared, terrified expression that had come into her face, "but it is somewhat weakened by the rheumatic fever, and may never again be as strong as it was previous to that attack; but by giving up your long walks, and taking more care of yourself in a general way, you will, I make no doubt, live to count up your three-score and ten years, and enjoy good health all the time."

"Well, sir, people used to say that I had a very stout heart; it was a sayin' that they had in regard ov me."

"They only spoke the truth, by all accounts; and you have the same stout heart still, but you must have a little more mercy on it, and not give it so much work to do. I am sure you understand what I mean. An attack of rheumatic fever as severe

as you have had, sometimes leaves a legacy behind it in the shape of a heart affection; but it will be nothing, nothing at all, if you are only moderately careful of yourself."

"I thank you, docthor, for tellin' me the thruth. Now that I know it, I'll take great care ov myself intirely, never fear. An' that *your* heart will never have any throuble or sorra down on it, will be my prayer to Almighty God evermore!"

Tom Whelan came next day with his cart and the feather-bed in it, according to his promise, lying on which, Oonagh made the journey to his house in quite a grand and luxurious fashion. On her arrival she met with a most affectionate reception from "herself" and the children, and the softest chair, and warmest corner by the fire was at once assigned to her. In a short time, when she was a little recovered from the fatigue of the journey, her eyes wandered round the kitchen as if in search of something, and at last she said: "Where is Bran?"

"Well, he's on a visit at present with wan ov the nabours. The schamer ov the world is for ever runnin' about from house to house, for every wan ov the nabours is fond ov him. It was only istherday —was it istherday, Molly, or this mornin'?—that he was playing wid Patsey Boland at the turn ov the

road beyant there, an' I'm sure he follyed the little gorsoon home. Patsey is a great playboy intirely, an' himself an' Bran is great frinds; he is always coaxin' the dog home wid him, so he is. But I'll go myself for him to-morra, if Patsey don't bring him back betune this an' then."

But in the morning when Bran did not make his appearance, and when no one wondered at his absence, or spoke of going to look for him, Oonagh began to suspect that notwithstanding Tom's plausible story, there was some unpleasant mystery connected with him. Then Tom saw that the truth could not be much longer concealed from her. But he only told her half the truth, for though he owned that her dog was dead, he never told her the manner of his death, nor the shocking circumstances that attended it. He led her to think that the dog had died from sheer old age, "an' for all the world went out like the snuff ov a candle, an' he lyin' on a lock ov straw at the fut ov my own bed. Sorra lie in it, as herself there will tell you." He could not bring himself to tell her, in her weak state, that her poor, faithful old dog had been actually stoned to death while keeping watch over the basket that had been entrusted to his care.

"The basket, an' what was in it wor safe enough,

but as for poor Bran, well, he fretted himself to death afther her"—in the previous account Tom had declared that he died of old age—"an' all we could do wouldn't comfort or cure him. Now that's the clane thruth for you, Oonagh, an' if you like, I'll show you the very place undher the whitethorn bush, that myself an' the childhre made a very purty grave, an' berrid him in it. Sure herself there will tell you how it was, an' be the same token, 'twas she that handed the spade to me when I was goin' out to dig the grave for poor Bran."

Thus appealed to, "herself" declared without the least hesitation that she had certainly handed the spade to Tom, when he and the children were going out to dig the grave, and moreover that it was little Mike that had carried it out of the house. The good woman's statement was perfectly true, for when her husband had gone back to where he had left the dog beside the basket, he found poor Bran shockingly mutilated, and quite dead, and the basket perfectly empty. He put all that was left of the faithful sentinel into his cart, and buried it under the whitethorn bush, as he had told Oonagh. She fully believed his story—for the truth in all its sickening horror could never have occurred to her—and it gratified her to know that her poor old Bran had been

cared for in the end. He had been her father's dog, and her own affectionate companion in all her wanderings; and she felt that it would be a long time before she should be reconciled to his loss, for while he was beside her, she would not think that she was altogether alone.

In the pure air, and with the wholesome food of the country, Oonagh rapidly recovered her strength, and weary of inaction, to which she had never been accustomed, she soon decided on resuming her travels. But mindful of the good doctor's instructions, she resolved not to do so on foot, even though this entailed an expense on her which at the first view seemed a large one. She bought a donkey, and a little cart that she could drive herself, and so be spared the fatigue of walking, and carrying her heavy basket. It would cost almost nothing to feed a donkey, and she could now enlarge her stock, and have besides a more varied assortment of goods. She soon found that her new plan answered well, for her profits increased in proportion to the additional bulk and greater variety of what she had to sell. And in addition to her own greater ease and comfort, secured by driving instead of walking, her savings bank book showed before long, that in purchasing the ass and cart she had made a

most profitable investment, and one that returned very good interest for her money.

The time had now arrived when little Johnny was to be put to a classical school in the nearest town, the master of which was that friend of Father O'Rafferty before alluded to. Hitherto he had attended the National School in the neighbourhood of Sally's house; but as "the Latin" was not taught there, she was obliged to remove him. She did so with great reluctance, for he had grown a strong, healthy boy under the fostering care of Sally, who was almost as fond of him as of her own children. However, there was no help for it, and she soon had him comfortably settled as a boarder in the new master's house, on what she considered very reasonable terms. In fact, they were absurdly reasonable, for Father O'Rafferty paid half, with strict directions to the master that he was to keep this part of the agreement a profound secret, and let Oonagh think she was paying all, when in reality she was paying but half. So it was no wonder that she thought the new master's terms were very reasonable!

As a matter of course, she never omitted going to see her boy, whenever she came to the town. The schoolmaster gave her the most favourable accounts

of his excellent capacity, and aptitude for learning, assuring her that she would yet have cause to be very proud of him, for that he was "a very bright boy, and would be a credit to the Irish Church." Once he persuaded her to remain for an hour after school broke up, so that she could judge for herself of the progress he was making. She sat and listened in silent awe, while the boy went through a page of Latin; translating it apparently to the satisfaction of the pedagogue, though it might just as well have been Sanscrit as Latin, for anything the poor ignorant woman knew of either language. But it all sounded very grand, and she knew by the pleased countenance of the master that the task he had set his pupil was well and rightly done. She professed herself as being perfectly satisfied with Johnny's progress, and with many thanks to the master for doing such justice to her boy, she went away, not much wiser than when she came, as the reader may well suppose, but infinitely more happy.

From that time everything went well with Oonagh. Her little trade prospered, and her health, now that she was spared much bodily fatigue, was good. She was glad to remember now, how firmly she had persevered in her resolution of adopting the child, who but for her would have gone to the union workhouse,

and bringing him up for the Church, in opposition to all those who had prophesied a signal and ignominious failure to all her plans. The worst of the storm was over, and from henceforth she would be sailing in comparatively smooth water. She would live to see the child of her love "wearing the robes," and even if she did not, she had saved as much money as would finish his education, and get him through his course at Maynooth. Her good friend, Father O'Rafferty, would take care that all should be right with Johnny, whether she lived, or was laid at rest. The only anxiety that was now on her mind was for her dear "Miss Grace," who was every day growing more delicate and frail. But in all other respects, Oonagh possessed her soul in peace, and pursued her life of labour and self-denial cheerfully and hopefully, always looking forward to the joyful time in the far distance, that was gradually but surely drawing nearer and nearer, as the years went on.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST OF THE FAMINE.

Oh Death! thy sentence is welcome to one in need, and whose strength faileth.

ECCLESIASTICUS.

ALL this time our old friend Father O'Rafferty had been fighting a gallant battle with the giant demon of the Famine. It must be confessed, however, that from the very beginning the odds were fearfully against him, and though his whole heart was in his work, he was not a match for the foe that confronted him at every turn, and who was "terrible as an army in battle array." The good priest did his best, but that in truth could be very little, and for one human creature that he was able to save, the Goliah that opposed him slew his dozens and his hundreds. The parish of Castle Cloyne, though large, was remote and very poor, even in good times; now it had become

almost a desert. The people had all melted away, like the foam of the sea. In the poor-house of the Electoral Union of which this parish formed a part, fourteen hundred human beings had died in the year of grace 1847! Many of these unfortunates had expired in the hall of the house immediately after having been admitted; others lived on a few days or weeks, as the case might be, but the case was a rare one, for they never applied for admission until they were dying, and then said they did so, to make sure of being buried in coffins, which they could not hope for, had they died in their own wretched hovels! Against calamity such as this, so wide-spread in its extent, so gigantic in its operations, and so deadly in its effects, the hand of man was powerless. The Irish clergy of all denominations had put their shoulders to the wheel manfully, and whatever were their theological differences, they willingly banded themselves together in the sacred fight for suffering humanity, and did good and valiant service, each in his own way, and among his own people. Some had more and harder work than others, for some districts were poorer, and consequently worse off than those in which the people did not depend altogether on the potatoe for their food. But all did what they could. To cope with the famine was like

trying to stem a torrent, or appease with soft words the raging of an angry sea.

Father O'Rafferty had a bold heart, and iron nerves, but they often almost failed him in that terrible time. It was a time indeed to try men's souls. He knew that it would never do to give way, or let health and spirits go down before the storm, so he tried hard to be as bright and cheery as it was in his natural disposition to be. But it was weary work. As a Catholic priest in a very poor and remote district, he naturally saw the worst side of the famine, its darkest colours, and most repulsive phase, and wherever he went, he was always in the shadow of its awful presence.

As the parish priest he was the chaplain of the nearest poor-house, and in the performance of his duty, he attended there every day, and often more than once in the day. On one particular morning when he arrived there, he was informed by one of the nurses, that a gentleman who had been admitted on the previous night, was dying, and would require the ministrations of a clergyman as soon as possible.

"A gentleman, did you say!" cried the priest, "there must be some mistake. What could bring a gentleman here?"

"Why, thin, father, I'll tell you that. He was found on the road outside last night, without a stir in him. I suppose he got a fit on the road, God bless the hearers! an' them that found him brought him in here, being quite convanient, you persave, sir. He's very far gone, your reverence, an' I was longing for you to come o' 'count ov him."

"But is he a Catholic?"

"I'll go bail he is so. I found a lovely set ov bades in his pocket, an' I'm sure that that's a good token ov it."

"Of course it is. I shall go to him at once," and suiting the action to the word, he walked on briskly to the infirmary, with the nurse at his heels. That infirmary was truly a dreadful place to visit, for those who were there had no actual disease, but were slowly dying of exhaustion, and the total collapse of all the vital forces. The priest, however, was well used to this sad place, and to all its sights and sounds of suffering. The nurse stopped before one of the beds, on which lay "the gentleman" she had sent for him to see, and in the strong glare of the sun that streamed down through the curtainless window overhead on the pallid face below, the priest saw that the latest arrival in the infirmary,

was his old friend and genial companion, Terry Macnamara!

And this was what one of the old gentry, "a son of the Sea," had come to; a death-bed in the poor-house of the district where his ancestors had once ruled as petty kings!

A swarm of flies filled the place, that buzzed and hummed incessantly, and settled on the faces and hands of the poor sick people, with an irritating pertinacity that was almost maddening. There was no attempt made to brush them away, or get rid of them by any means, for the place was the sick ward of a poor-house, and the patients were only paupers; the weather besides was very warm, and it was no one's business, and so no one cared to exert himself about such a trifle. Though the windows were all open, the air was close and heavy, and laden with that most sickening yet most indescribable odour, the breath of decaying mortality. It was altogether a very comfortless and dreary place to which the poor gentleman had been brought to die.

"Go down at once to the porter, and tell him to send the doctor here as soon as he comes," said the priest.

The nurse hurried away on his errand, and in

a few moments returned with the doctor, whom she had met in the lower hall.

"I suppose this is some friend of yours?" he said to Father O'Rafferty, when they had exchanged a hasty greeting.

"Yes; a very old and dear friend, and one that I never thought would fall so low as to be brought here."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders significantly, as much as to say such a thing was nothing new.

"I am very much concerned about him, doctor, for I have known him all my life most intimately, and he is, apart from that, very nearly related to my ward, Miss Dillon. I intend having him removed at once to my own house, where she can attend to him, and where he will be more comfortable than he is here."

"Impossible, my dear sir," replied the medical man; "he would die most probably before he was half the way to your house. It is not his days alone that are numbered, but his very hours."

"Is it possible?"

"Quite certain. I saw that last night when I saw him on his admission."

"Why did not you send for me then?"

"What was the use? He was then as insensible

as he is now, and quite unable to recognise you, or anyone else. He has had a fit of apoplexy."

"It is dreadful that one of his name and family should die in a poor-house!"

"That may be a subject of grief to his friends, but not to himself, for he is past all that now. He will not recover consciousness any more, and it is much better to let him die peacefully where he is, than try to remove him. Nothing can ever grieve or trouble him again in this world."

"Then in that case I must go home at once, for Miss Dillon. He shall not die without one of his own blood and kindred to stand beside him. Her father and poor Terry were first cousins. She would never forgive me if I let him die here unknown to her."

The priest went away accordingly, and returned in an hour, accompanied by Grace, who had but lately risen from a sick bed. Weak and ailing though she was, she did not hesitate for a moment when the good father told his sad news, but came at once to attend to her father's old friend, and not leave the task of closing his eyes to a hireling. She did not look far from the end herself, as she walked slowly up the long room, leaning on the priest's arm. She had cried all the way since leaving home, and when she came to the bed, and looked down on the gaunt frame

and haggard face of its dying occupant, and remembered who he was, and what he had been not very long ago, she got into such a hysterical passion of weeping, that the priest thought it would have killed her. He called for a glass of water, and when she had taken a little of it, he threatened in a tone half soothing, and wholly authoritative, to take her away again, unless she made some effort to control herself. In a short time she became more calm, and though she still wept, it was softly and silently.

But soon her woman's instinct came into play, and she set about making herself of some use to the dying man. She took off her shawl, and with the help of a pair of iron skewers, brought her by the nurse, she fastened it across the curtainless window, to shield the moveless face from the fierce glare of the sun. Then she saw how the flies buzzed round the bed, and she was equal to that emergency also. She again sent the nurse downstairs—it is really wonderful how far a shilling given in the right time and place will go towards making persons of that class civil and obliging—for a plate heaped up with treacle, and she soon had the satisfaction of seeing the busy little tormentors fastened in swarms to the sweet, gluey compound. Nothing then remained to be done for her

old friend, except to moisten his lips occasionally with some wine and water, and she sat down on a low seat by the bed, determined not to leave him until all was over.

By-and-by, Father O'Rafferty brought her a glass of wine and some biscuits, that he procured from the matron. It was surprising how thoughtful and gentle the bluff old priest could be where she was in question. But though she drank the wine to please him, she could eat nothing. Then he was obliged to leave her, for he had many other sick calls to attend to, but he promised to return as soon as possible. Then Grace sent away the nurse, and began her silent, lonely watch. She did not remember that there were many other sick and dying persons in that room, which contained two long rows of beds, all of them occupied; she neither saw nor heard them, though some were loud and voluble enough in proclaiming their sufferings, while others lay perfectly still and quiet, as if they had not sufficient life or strength left in them, to give utterance even to a groan. But she thought of none of them. Her mind was far away in the happy home of her childhood, and in every scene that her memory conjured up, Terry Macnamara held a foremost place. Now, he was giving

Hyacinth his first lesson in riding, while yet the child was so young that he had to be kept on the saddle with one strong hand, while the other held the pony's rein. Again, he was opening a mysterious box with the most tantalising slowness and deliberation, from the depths of which, after a little time, he drew forth a most beautiful wax doll, with big black eyes that could open and shut, and nearly as tall as the little lady who stood speechless with surprise and delight on beholding this magnificent gift. Another time, he was taking his post-prandial glass of punch with her father and the priest, discussing with them the news of the country, and laughing heartily at some harmless jest. All that was past and done with; a dream that had been very pleasant while it lasted, but from which the wakening had been very terrible. Her childhood's happy home had been bought by a stranger; her dear father was sleeping soundly in the family vault; Hyacinth was far away in a foreign land, eating his bread in poverty and toil; and now, here was Terry Macnamara dying on a poor-house pallet, after enduring great privation and want, not the less severe that they were endured in proud, uncomplaining silence. She, herself, was fading slowly away, doomed to die in the prime and glory of her youth. Even for

the shelter above her, she was indebted to the kindness of one on whom she had no legitimate claim, one who was the son of her father's poorest tenant.

When Father O'Rafferty returned, it was only to receive poor Terry's last sigh. As the doctor had predicted, he never recovered consciousness, but passed quietly away without knowing where he was, or recognising the kind and true hearts that stayed by him to the last.

When Grace had closed his eyes with tender and reverent hand, the good father led her away. She could do nothing more for her old friend, and it was not a suitable place for her to be in, longer than was absolutely necessary. When they arrived at home, he insisted that she should go to bed at once, but she said that before doing so, she had something to say to him.

"Well, my dear, what is it?" he replied, placing a chair for her with the same respectful deference, as if she were still Miss Dillon of Castle Cloyne.

"It is about poor Terry's funeral. He must not be buried in a pauper coffin, nor in a pauper grave."

"Of course not, Miss Grace. No one ever even thought of such a thing."

"And, Father John, he must be buried in Quin Abbey, where all of his blood and name have been

laid to rest for nearly a thousand years. Had he died rich, it would be so, and now that he has died poor, it *must* be so."

"My dear young lady, I had arranged all that in my own mind, long before you spoke about it."

"Oh, dear sir! a thousand thanks for your kindness."

"I'm not very flush of cash just now—what poor priest is at the present time?—but I have the young colt ready for sale, and he is sure to bring a pretty decent price, even in these bad times. I heard that some of the army agents were at the last fair, looking out for young strong horses for mounting the cavalry. It is just in the nick of time for us. Yes, the colt must go."

"No, father; I will not have anyone—not even you—put a hand to this work, which of right is mine. I am the child of his old and dear friend, and his nearest relation; and while I can pay his funeral expenses, no other person shall do it."

"*You*, dear child?"

"Yes, father, *I!* I was paid half of poor Hyacinth's annuity only last week, and I have not spent any of it. Twenty-five pounds is not a very large sum of money, but it will be sufficient for this purpose. It will not provide a grand funeral, but

it will send him to Quin Abbey, and that is all I want. Besides," she added, with a fresh burst of tears, "a grand funeral, such as all of his name had that were ever brought home to Quin Abbey, would be very much out of place for one who drew his last breath in a poor-house!"

"But that was not through necessity, dear Miss Grace, not by any means," he said, trying to give her some comfort. "The poor old gentleman was on his way, I'll be bound, to pay us a visit, and he got a fit on the road, as old people sometimes will, you know. The stupid people who found him brought him to the poor-house, instead of bringing him on here. That is just how it was, my dear, so you may make your mind easy on that point. And as you happen to have the money convenient, I won't oppose you, partly because I think you are quite right, and partly because I know it will be a satisfaction to you to feel that he was buried, not by a stranger, but by his own next of kin. You are right in this, dear Miss Grace, and doing what your worthy father would tell you to do, if he could speak to you out of the grave."

Accordingly, Terry Macnamara was brought to Quin Abbey, and laid to rest with "his people" in the cloisters of that magnificent old ruin, as he

had always wished to be. It was of course a very plain funeral, as much so as was consistent with the respectability of the deceased, and the high character that he had ever borne, without stain or blemish. It was altogether a different funeral from that of Dominic Dillon, his cousin; for short as was the time between the two, a wonderful revolution had taken place in the interim, all over the country. There were no mourning coaches, no long train of people on horseback and on foot, to follow the hearse; for the people had all melted away, and the carriages and horsemen had departed in their wake. A distant cousin of poor Terry's, who had nothing else to give, gave his time, and stood beside the grave as chief mourner, and Father O'Rafferty read the burial-service. But though there were no crowds of people, no long array of carriages and horsemen, no white scarves and hatbands, such as was fitting at the obsequies of a "son of the Sea," yet the "poor gentleman" was buried with every mark of respect, and the due performance of all Christian rites.

Now both reader and author can draw breath freely, for we have come to the end of the Famine. It was not an easy task to paint even a

feeble picture of that terrible time, and assuredly it was not a pleasant or gracious one. Only the pen of Dante could describe it; only the brush of Rembrandt, in its darkest and most lurid colours, could portray it!

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS DILLON RECEIVES A VISIT.

A tender creature, full of whims and charms,
A beauteous nurseling, fresh from parents' arms,
Who sought no business, no affairs she knew
Of thought or reason, and had nought to do.

GEORGE CRABBE.

GRACE DILLON had not received many visitors since she had come to reside in the humble cottage of the priest, for obvious reasons. No one cared to keep up an acquaintance with one from whom no advantage could now be derived, one who had so greatly "fallen from her high estate," who was alone and poor. At no time of her life had she many friends of her own class, and not many acquaintances, for her home was in a remote country district, and she was both too poor and too proud to seek for them outside it. The slight deformity of her figure, greatly exaggerated by her own sensitiveness, had served

to make her shy and retiring, and this, added to a state of chronic ill-health, made her think that solitude was a lesser evil than mixing in a society where she should stand on such unequal terms with those who were more highly favoured both by nature and fortune. She could hold her own well in society, if she were as rich as she was proud, and as beautiful as she was amiable and accomplished; but situated as she was, she shrank with all the proud sensitiveness, which is always sure to be the peculiar dowry of such as she was, from all contact with the world. She had but one friend and one acquaintance from the time she had returned home from her Parisian convent. The one friend was her foster-sister; but though Oonagh loved her very dearly, and thought that there was no one in the world like her sweet Miss Grace, she was too humble, too ignorant, and differed so much from her—as was only natural she should—in all her feelings and ideas, for any real sympathy to exist between them. There could be very little of what is understood by the word friendship, which implies equality as well as sympathy, between the long-descended educated gentlewoman and the daughter of her nurse, a peasant girl, as humbly bred as she was lowly born. Grace had always loved Oonagh with a protecting, sheltering

kind of love, and latterly she admired and reverenced her for the nobility of her character, and the steadfast fidelity with which she was performing the labour of love that she had imposed on herself. And on her side, Oonagh looked up to the young lady as to a superior being; humbly grateful for her condescension, and made happy by even the slightest token of her regard.

Grace's only acquaintance was Caroline Wilson. The two girls were about the same age, but otherwise there was no great similarity between them. Caroline was a mindless, vain coquette; *that* Grace had always known, but she had never known how thoroughly without mind or heart the spoiled, indulged girl really was, until she had discarded Hyacinth, when he had ceased to be the heir of Castle Cloyne. After that episode in her history she came no more to visit Grace. Even on Mr. Dillon's death, she neither came, nor wrote to express any sympathy, and Grace was rather glad of this, as it saved her from a good deal of painful embarrassment. Their paths in life were now so far apart, and all their thoughts and feelings ran in such different grooves, that Grace felt relieved by the knowledge that it was not likely they would ever meet again. Not that she envied Caroline her beauty, or her prosperity, or any other advantage

she possessed; she was too meek to be resentful, and too proud to be envious. But her heart was very sore for Hyacinth's sake, and when she remembered how good, and kind, and handsome he was, she could not help despising the silly flirt that had thrown him over because of his change of fortune, and driven him forth from his native land, a banished man. She felt no enmity towards Caroline, but neither could she feel respect or love.

Miss Wilson, however, was not all heartless, and in the depths of her soul there existed a feeling that, if it was not love for Grace, was not far removed from it. For a long time she had been longing to pay the sick girl a visit, but could never muster up sufficient courage to do so; for she felt that Grace could not be otherwise than loyal to her absent brother, and consequently could not receive her on the old affectionate terms. But now the death of poor Terry Macnamara afforded her a decent pretext for making a visit of condolence, which she was not slow to avail herself of. Besides her lingering regard for Grace, she had a good deal of curiosity to hear how Hyacinth was getting on at the Antipodes, and if he had broken his heart for her sake, as in duty bound, and according to all laws of romance, he ought to have done. But her visit should ostensibly be one of con-

dolence. Poor Terry was Grace's nearest relative, and she would naturally be in great grief for him, and be glad, no doubt, to receive one who had known him, and who would come to sympathise with her in this new trouble. It was a very transparent excuse indeed, but the spoiled beauty was not accustomed to consult the wishes or feelings of anyone, and in gratifying her own, which she invariably did, she was not inclined to be either bashful or delicate.

Grace was lying on a sofa before the open window, when the pony-carriage from Beech Hill drove up to the hall-door. In another moment Caroline came into the priest's modest parlour, which seemed altogether too humble and mean a place for her costly dress and stately presence. With a bright, glad look on her face, she advanced to the sofa, radiant and beautiful as of old. But the smile died away, and she lost a great deal of her self-possession, when Grace, who had risen on her entrance, stood with outstretched hand to welcome her. She looked so delicate, so frail, so shadowy, so unlike herself, that Caroline's heart, selfish and worldly as it was, felt both shocked and grieved. It seemed but yesterday, Caroline thought, that she was in reasonably good health and very happy, and now, great Heaven! what a wreck she was!

There was indeed a wonderful contrast between the two girls, as they stood together. One in all the bravery of the richest and most fashionable attire, in the bloom of her beauty, and in the glory of perfect health; the other pale and wasted, with the shadow of the tomb resting on her, and wearing a dress that was more remarkable for its good taste and simplicity, than for its costliness. And yet in that small room, standing to receive her visitor, simply dressed, and with few pretensions to beauty, she looked, Caroline thought, a gentlewoman every inch of her, dignified, courteous, and at her ease.

"It was very good of you, Caroline, to take such a long drive to see me," she said, when they had sat down. "I little thought when I got up this morning, that I should have the pleasure of seeing you so very soon."

"I am quite ashamed, dearest Grace, of not having come to see you long since," replied Caroline, quite confused by the kindness of her reception, "but it is a long drive, and many things prevented me from time to time. I was in Dublin for some weeks, and when I returned home I had some visitors staying with me, and it wasn't easy to leave them even for a day."

"I can quite understand that—pray don't make any apologies. Now that you *are* come, I am very glad to see you."

"Had I known you were ill, nothing should have prevented me from coming sooner," she went on, encouraged by the gentle courtesy of Grace. "I am sorry, dear, to see you in such indifferent health."

"Oh! it is nothing—at least, nothing worth making a fuss about. You remember that in the best of times I was never as strong as other people. You must not judge of me by this day, for I feel quite weak from the great heat, but I shall be, I am sure, much better to-morrow."

"Whether you are sick or well, you are a dear good, lovable darling!" cried Caroline, kissing her with some of her old caressing manner, which few could resist when she chose to assume it. For the minute she was sincere, as she always was, for Caroline was "everything by turns, and nothing long," and Grace wondered that she could have been so foolish as to feel angry, for even a moment, with such a frivolous, vain butterfly, as thoughtless as she was beautiful.

"I have brought you some fruit and flowers, Grace. You always loved flowers, and you will find the fruit grateful this very hot weather. Now, no

thanks; I am only too glad to have them for you." And flying out to the pony-carriage, she returned with two large baskets, one filled with the most tempting-looking fruit, and the other heaped up with bright, beautiful greenhouse blossoms. The eyes of the poor sick girl lighted up, and a glad smile broke over her pale face, as she bent down to feast on the delicate colours, and inhale the fragrance of the treasures spread out before her. Flowers she had always loved, and at Castle Cloyne had had them in great profusion; but since she had left it, she had to content herself with the homely, old-fashioned productions of the priest's small garden, and the wild flowers brought to her occasionally by the children of the neighbourhood, who, in scouring the meadows and hedgerows, had a shrewd eye to the penny they were sure to get from her, in return for their simple offering. But primroses and cornflowers in their wild beauty could not be compared with the exquisite gems that she now touched as tenderly, as if every one was a living thing, and could feel how much she loved it.

"You have conferred a great pleasure on me, my dear Caroline," she said gratefully. "You who live always among the flowers, can hardly understand the enjoyment of seeing some of my old favourites once

more. I shall have a very happy evening, arranging and putting them all in water. And dear Father John will be so pleased when he sees them."

When she had sufficiently admired the flowers, Grace rang a handbell that was on a little table near her, and desired Bridget, who answered her summons, to bring some wine and biscuits. It was a very inferior sort of luncheon to what she had been accustomed to give her visitors, but it was the best that she had, and she gave it simply and gracefully, without apology or comment.

Caroline longed to ask some question about Hyacinth, but her courage failed her, and Grace never mentioned his name, and avoided any subject that might have the effect of introducing it. Then Caroline alluded to Mr. Macnamara's death, and went through some of the usual commonplace phrases of condolence. When this topic had been exhausted she looked at her watch, announcing that it was time for her to leave, as she had a long way to drive before she could arrive at Beech Hill.

"But you have not told me any news at all, Grace," she said, pretending to button her glove.

"There is nothing in the way of news that I know of, except your own marriage, which is the chief topic of conversation just now. Am I to

congratulate you, or is it only one of the usual idle rumours that are always floating about?"

Miss Wilson's face flushed scarlet. She had not anticipated this simple, direct question, and it came on her by surprise. She laughed, however, and muttered something to the effect that matters were not yet quite settled.

"Then it is true, and no mere rumour. I can only say, dear Caroline, that I hope you will be very happy, and that you have my best and kindest wishes, now and always."

"Grace, you are an angel!" she exclaimed, quite subdued by this unexpected kindness; "but you were always superior to any other woman I know. I never doubted your good heart, and I thank you very much."

"Indeed, I have every prospect of happiness," she went on in a more flippant tone, for the softened mood called up by the gentle tone and manner of Grace was, like all her moods, very evanescent. "Major Murray is quite devoted to me, and I think if anything should happen to break off our marriage, he would positively break his heart. Papa is quite satisfied with his family and position, as well as with the pecuniary arrangements, but all that is papa's affair, you know. I love dear Edward for

himself alone, and not his family, or position, though they are all that I could desire. If he were to become a beggar to-morrow, and be stripped of all those advantages, it would make no change whatever in my feelings towards him. I should love him all the same, and exult in my love."

It was as much as Grace could do to keep silent during this speech, which was wanting in all the elements of refinement and delicacy, considering that it was addressed to the sister of Hyacinth Dillon. But though silent, a slight elevation of her eyebrows expressed rather significantly her astonishment and contempt. Miss Wilson was not slow in observing the gesture, slight though it was, and she felt that she had made herself ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of the grave, simple-minded girl, who was herself so unworldly and so truthful. Glancing once more at her watch, she started up, declaring that now she must really go. Then kissing Grace in a most demonstrative manner, and assuring her that she would soon come to see her again, she sailed out of the room, and mounting her phaeton, drove off, waving her hand to Grace very graciously, as she was whirled past the window.

"I hope she will not come here any more," sighed poor Grace, as she lay back wearily on the

sofa. "The poor, vain fool! How truly thankful I ought to be that poor Hyacinth escaped her! Whatever his lot in life may be, such a wife could never make him happy, and that she is not his wife, and never can be either, is the first ray of light that has broken in on us, and an omen of happiness for him in the future. That he should be condemned to a life-long companionship with such a girl, would be very dreadful. Poverty, and toil, and California, are all very bad, but they are only minor evils when compared with such a fate as that would be. Still, I hope that she will be happy with Major Murray. If he loves her all will be well; but if he is marrying her for her money, as it is said he is, then may God pity her!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN CALIFORNIA.

Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to depart from thee, for whithersoever thou goest I will go, and where thou dwellest, I also will dwell.

BOOK OF RUTH.

HYACINTH DILLON remained standing at the stern of the ship that was to bear him away to America, as long as the English coast was in sight. When at last it had faded away in the distance, and nothing remained of it but a thin line, that in its turn vanished altogether, he still stood on the spot from where he had waved his hat in final adieu to Terry Macnamara, quite absorbed in reflections that were none of them of a very pleasurable nature. Now, for the first time in his life, he was "lord of himself, that heritage of woe," but this did not appear to have added to his happiness. But there is something in novelty and adventure so delightful and alluring to the mind of masculine

youth, that it is almost an unfailing anodyne for every care and trouble. Soon he threw off his gloomy sadness, and began to plan out his new life, and calculate his chances in that wonderful auriferous region for which he was bound. The sun had long set, and darkness had settled down on the ship. But though there was darkness there, there was no silence, for the sailors all hurried to and fro, doing all those things that are inevitably left to the last, and trying to make some order out of the chaos of boxes, hampers, and baggage of every description, that lay strewn about the decks. There was, too, the deep hoarse voice of the pilot issuing his orders to the men, and the cheery "Aye, aye, sir," of their replies, rising at intervals over every other sound.

After some time the pilot left them, and Dillon felt sorry when he saw him going over the side into the small craft that was waiting to take him back again to the shore. That pilot was the last link that bound Hyacinth to his home!

After the departure of the pilot all the passengers went below but Hyacinth, and a person that he had not previously noticed. This man stood near him, as if he too felt lonely, and courted companionship.

"It is a fine night, friend," said Hyacinth

cheerfully, "and it promises to be a fine day to-morrow."

"Well, sir, it is purty fair at the present," was the reply, in a voice that Hyacinth Dillon knew right well, "but as I never in all my born days was at say before, I couldn't make any guess at all as to the sort ov day to-morrow will be."

"Pat Flanagan, is that you?" exclaimed Dillon, laying his hand on his companion's shoulder.

"Sure enough, sir, it is myself that's in it. 'Tis very surprisin' that you didn't know me before, an' I standin' here fornent you, ever since we lost sight ov land."

"How could I ever imagine I should meet you here, and how could I recognise you in the dark?"

"Why, thin, Masther Hy'cinth, you ought to know my skin if it was hung upon a bush, let alone when myself is inside ov it. I thought you'd be glad to see some wan from home, an' you so far away from it."

"And so I am, Pat, very glad. I was just a little bit low a while ago, but hearing your voice once more has brightened me up wonderfully."

"Ov coorse it did, an' why wouldn't it? Do you know, sir, that I had a notion that it would do that

same, an' that's why I'm comin' to Americay along wid you."

"I am delighted, Pat, to find that we are to be fellow passengers. There are few in the world I would sooner travel with than yourself."

"Thank'ee, sir, but I'm not your fellow passenger at all," said Pat gravely. "I'm your own man, as I was own man to the poor ould masther, God rest his sowl to-night!"

Hyacinth burst into a shout of laughter.

"I'm very proud, sir, to see you in such good sperrits. You see I done well to folly afther you."

"Pat, my good fellow, I am as poor now as you are yourself—much poorer, in fact, for you have three hundred pounds in bank, and I haven't as many pence there. So far from being able to keep a servant, the question is how shall I be able to keep myself? The very idea of such a thing is ridiculous. You must be going out to your uncle and his family."

"My uncle is dead, sir, an' as I never saw any ov his childre, I wouldn't care to cross the say, for nothing at all but to make their acquaintance."

"But you can't come with me, man; certainly not as my servant, for I have no pretension now to any appendage of the sort."

"By your lave, sir, I *am* goin' wid you, an' I'm your boy, for want ov a betther. As for diet an' wages, *they* can hang on for the present. They're bound to diet me in this ship as long as the v'yage lasts; for I paid for my passage honestly—steerage, you persave," and he pulled a card out of the breast-pocket of his coat, and flourished it before Dillon's eyes. "'Tis time enough when we get to the other side ov this big herring-pond, to have any arguin' or whole-tack on the head ov it. Vittles is dirt chape, I hear, in Americay, an' as for the wages, that's neither here nor there. When you make your fortune out there, you'll pay them all in a lump, an' if you haven't it, sure it will make no odds whatsomever."

"But I may never make my fortune, as you call it, and I may die in that strange place."

"Fake an' sure, it won't be sthrange when Pat Flanagan is to the fore. An' if you get sick—we won't talk at all ov dyin'—sure 'tis thin you'll want me more than ever, to run ov messages, an' nurse you, till you're well agin. 'Twould be a quare story, surely, if your father's son was to go to that sthrange place, without havin' his own man to attind him!"

"But, Pat——"

"Arrah, good luck to you, Masther Hy'cinth, an' have sinse. I paid for my passage in this ship, an' you can't prevent me from goin' in it, nor from goin' alongside ov you when we land. I mane to see a dale ov the world, by bein' in service wid you, sir."

"Let it be as you like, Pat. I am glad to have you with me as a friend and companion, though I cannot afford to keep a servant."

"Ah! sir, 'tis all wan, sure, whatever way you like to put it. As long as we're together, I don't care."

"But why did you keep in the background so long? You should have come forward, if only to say good-bye to Mr. Macnamara."

"Well, sir, if I did, the pair ov ye would bundle me out ov the ship, neck and crop, or maybe give me in charge to the nearest peeler. So you see, I waited till I could slip on boord unknown to ye, fair an' aisy. 'Tis myself was sorry that I couldn't bid the poor ould gintleman good-bye, for he was a rale gintleman to the backbone, an' neither a *shoneen* nor a *half sir,* like a dale ov them that's goin' these times. An' he was mighty pleasant, too! Will I ever forget all he laughed that day ov the Election, when I brought in that devil's limb,

Pether Darcy, dhrest like an ould man, to vote for the masther, an' purtendin' that he was poor Martin MacDermott, that was more than a month dead an' berrid. I must say of Pether, that it was very nately done, an' his vote passed all the same as if it was ould Martin himself was in it."

After a pleasant and prosperous voyage, Hyacinth Dillon and his faithful henchman arrived in New York. They had not much luggage, for they had brought nothing but what was absolutely necessary, and after a few days spent in seeing the city, proceeded on to California.

To the young gentleman brought up in the ease and luxury of his father's house, the rough life and hard labour that awaited him at the diggings, were extremely trying and distasteful. Now, for the first time, did he realise what was meant by the primal curse, that man should eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. And when to the hardest toil were added the coarsest food, and no better lodging than a canvas tent, it may be imagined how very strange it all was to the pampered heir of Castle Cloyne. But he was a fine, hearty young fellow, and determined to make the best of everything. He was in for it now, and must go through with it, as he best could. He had burned his boats

behind him, and must go forward at all costs, for retreat was impossible. He had no home to return to, no father's house open to receive him; he had come there of his own free will, and he resolved to achieve independence and conquer fortune, or leave his bones in that foreign land. So he wisely tried to make the best of his present life, hoping that it would not endure very long, and bearing all its discomforts with a cheerful patience, amazing to Pat, who remembered the old days of Castle Cloyne, and the life of luxury that his young master had led there. He saw Hyacinth working day after day at the "claim" they shared between them, often up to his knees in water; his hands, that were once so smooth and white, rough, discoloured, and often bleeding from wielding the pickaxe; and never any better food after his hard day's toil, than the everlasting "damper," mutton hastily broiled, and tea, always without milk, and often without sugar. The good blood in his veins, and the light heart and sanguine hope of youth in his bosom, "bare bravely up his chin," like the Roman "who kept the bridge, In the brave days of old."

In those days he was very glad that Pat had come with him to California, for without this humble friend he would have been altogether alone. At the time of the gold fever, as it was called, all the refuse of humanity

in the world crowded to the gold-fields; all those who were too discontented to settle down to any regular business, or had made their own country too hot for them, who had no brains to study, or no homes to cling to, all flocked to the diggings, "not in single spies, but in battalions." The country was overrun with adventurers of every class and nationality; rowdies, whose belts held a pistol on one side and a bowie-knife on the other, and who had as little respect for the life of a man as for that of a prairie wolf. There were drunken swaggerers who spent at the whiskey-bars in one day the fruits of a week's hard toil, and then when all was gone, sneaked round the huts and tents at night, to try if the inmates were off their guard, so they might be robbed, or just as probably murdered, for, in case of discovery, or resistance, one was as likely as the other.

Among this horde of desperadoes, gathered together from every country under heaven, Hyacinth found himself very much out of place. Not with one out of every hundred of them had he a thought in common. He could not drink, or stab, or fire a bullet through a man's body for an awkward or an untimely word. He would not consent to sit up all night in a whiskey-bar, playing euchre and poker with the roughest and most godless men that could

be found in any part of the world. He shrank from them in disgust—from their coarse profanity and vulgar slang, from their crass ignorance, and total disregard of all the decencies of civilised life. He made no acquaintances among them, and on their side they avoided him, though they felt a sort of contemptuous respect for him. He was just as little to their taste as they were to his.

But there was one exception to this rule; one person that Hyacinth did not shun, and whose manner and conversation rather attracted than repelled him. This was a young man—hardly more than a boy—who had come out from England in the same ship, and in this way they had become acquainted. He was a slight, delicate-looking lad, with a face of almost feminine beauty, and whose every act and word bore the unmistakable stamp of refinement and culture. Hyacinth often wondered what reverse of fortune could have brought Brown—that was the name he called himself, but his new acquaintance had shrewdly suspected that it was not his real one—to dig for gold in California. He was so young, and soft, and so unfit apparently for hardship of any kind, that the rough life and wild company of the gold-fields must have been as little congenial to his taste as they were novel to his experience. They

were so to Dillon, but then he was of a different stamp altogether—in physique a perfect Hercules, who had been taught courage and endurance by the free, hardy, out-of-door life that he had led from his very birth. But this poor boy was evidently either fresh from college, or from some luxurious home in town or city, far away from where men follow on moor and hill the hardy pursuits that brace the nerves and make the body robust and strong. But all this was merely speculation, for Brown, though agreeable and conversational enough on ordinary subjects, never spoke of himself, nor said a word that in the slightest degree could have touched on his antecedents. No one could betray his confidence, for he gave it to no one. He was fairly communicative as to his future plans, but he jealously guarded the secret of the past, if it did indeed contain a secret.

When they had arrived in New York, the young men separated. Brown went off at once to the gold-fields, and Hyacinth remained behind for some days, as has been said in a former page. But, not having much money to spend in the Empire City, he and Pat soon set out on their journey, which at that time was very long, and by no means safe. Now it can be made by rail, both expeditiously and comfortably, but at the time when the gold fever was at its height,

the road, or rather track, for it was little more, went through dense forests, beset by hordes of Red Indians, or, worse still, by people who were robbers by profession, and murderers by instinct. They arrived, however, in safety at the gold-fields, and were not long in pitching upon a "claim," and setting up their tent beside it.

In a little time Hyacinth remembered Brown, and after some search, found out that he too had got a "claim," and was working it in company with a man he called his partner, at no great distance from Dillon's tent.

Brown was very glad to see Hyacinth again, and very grateful to him for having sought him out so soon. The poor young fellow looked ill and worn, and it was easy to see that he was altogether out of his element in the rude way of life that he had chosen for himself. He was a strong contrast to his partner—a long, lean, shambling-looking man—on every line of whose ugly face the word "rascal" was imprinted in unmistakable characters. Where Brown could have picked up this unpromising specimen of the human family Hyacinth could not imagine; still less, how he could have consented to become his partner, and live in the same hut with him. But such was the case, and he could only

wonder, and prophesy all sorts of evil from such ill-assorted companionship. But it was no affair of his; the young man was old enough to manage his own affairs, in which he, a comparative stranger, could have no right to interfere. But he resolved to keep an eye on the pair, as far as his own business gave him leisure to do so, and to stand Brown's friend, if any occasion for doing so should ever arise during his own stay in the place.

In the meantime he and Pat worked, as only navvies and gold-diggers know how to do, from sunrise to sunset. When it became too dark to work any longer, they were so hungry and weary that they could do nothing but eat a hasty meal, and then go to sleep on the wretched mattresses that served them for beds. The only day on which they rested from this round of monotonous, and as yet barren toil, was Sunday. It was a day not to be found in the calendar of the gold-fields—not, at least, in its character of the Lord's Day. The diggers worked away as usual—boring, shovelling the earth out of their pits, and washing the gold-dust from the clay. If they remembered the sacred day at all, it was to spend the morning lounging about the liquor-stores, and the evening in quarrelling over a pack of dirty cards. It was a rare thing when one

of these evenings ended without bloodshed, or it might be downright murder. But Dillon and his "partner" could never put aside the reverence due to the Lord's Day, though far away from the old green land, where in churches of every creed, Christian worshippers assembled for prayer and praise. There was neither a priest nor a religious service of any description in this godless place, peopled by desperate and reckless men; men who scoffed at every creed, and with whom it was, not a word and a blow, but a blow before the word. The incessant quarrelling of those men, the drunken orgies, the midnight outrages, the entire defiance of all law—the only sort there being administered by a self-constituted tribunal called the Vigilance Committee—made a perfect hell on the one day in the week that should of right be given to thoughts of peace and good-will to men.

Hyacinth had not seen Brown for some days, and on one particular Sunday, he thought he could not do better than make some inquiries respecting him. So leaving Pat smoking his pipe before the tent, in a very lazy and contented fashion, he set out on his voyage of discovery.

When he arrived at the tent of Hiram H. Jefferson, as he styled himself, he found this last-named worthy sitting on an empty cask, his legs resting on

the top rung of a ladder, and his toes on a level with his eyes. He was reading a very old newspaper, and as he read he chewed a large lump of tobacco, and expectorated to the right and left with great perseverance. When he saw the new-comer, he discharged a perfect volley of saliva, sprang to his feet, and shook his hand with as hard a grip as if he wanted to wring it out of the socket.

"Waal, mister, this air kind, I dew declare," he said, in a drawling, nasal accent. "I can't but feel sorter glad, when you come to my lo-cation."

"Thank you," replied Dillon, "but I did not come to see you only. I came to see your partner, as well as yourself, to-day. You passed my tent last evening in your usual good health, but I have not seen him for some time, so I have come to inquire for him."

"He's not altogether very spry, those days, I guess."

"I am sorry to hear that; what is amiss with him?"

"He's got some darned sort of fever hanging over him, and I calculate he'll just have to go through with it. He's rather a poor sort of chap, without any grit in him, and I wouldn't be surprised if the time was come for him to hand in his cheques."

By this figure of speech, Mr. Jefferson would seem to indicate that he thought his young partner was in danger of death.

"I fear he is a bad subject for fever."

"Waal, boss, that's a fact. The poor cuss has no grit in him, and I reckon that he had no business to come out to these air diggins, nohow. He may die, or he may live, but whatever way you fix it, he won't be worth more'n his salt for a long time to come."

"Could I see him?" asked Dillon.

"Certainly, if you like, but he's no great sight to see. He warn't much at any time, and that's a fact, but he's suthin awful to see just now. You can come through, right away," and discharging another volley, he beckoned to his visitor to follow him into the tent.

There, lying on a very dirty old mattress, and tossing from side to side, consumed with what promised to be a bad fever, lay the poor English lad. It was a strange home for one so gentle and refined, a miserable place for one who, if he were in England, would be tended doubtless by gentle and loving hands. He knew Hyacinth at once, and held out to him a thin hand whose pulse was beating quick and fast.

"It is so good of you to come and look me up," he said. "I am very ill."

"He *is* ill, sirée, and that's a fact," observed Jefferson.

"Has he no one but you to nurse him?" asked Dillon, whose heart was full of pity for the sick, friendless boy.

"I guess I'm doing the best I can for him, mister," said the American, with an angry look on his face.

"But you can't be always with him, and he is too ill to be left alone."

"Waal, I don't see how you can fix it any better. There air no doctor fellows, nor nurses, in these diggins, so he must get on the best way he can without them."

"Do you think you could walk as far as my tent?" said Dillon, bending over Brown. "My man and I could look after you in turn, and your partner here would be free to attend to his own affairs."

"I could easily walk twice as far," cried the sick youth eagerly, and with a most imploring look in his soft eyes. "Oh, take me away, while I am able to go!"

"We could bring him between us; the distance is very trifling," said Hyacinth to the American.

"Waal, boss, if you air satisfied, so is this here child. He's not much good as a partner now in this here lo-cation, but don't say that I want to get rid of him, nohow."

"I shall say nothing of the sort. To take him away is my own suggestion, and not yours."

"All right, boss. Now go ahead."

He put his arms under Brown, and raised him to his feet. Hyacinth wrapped the blanket closely round him, and between them they carried him out into the air, which seemed to give him a little strength. After a moment he was able to walk slowly, while they supported him at each side. In this way they brought him to Dillon's tent, where Pat was still smoking his pipe. He at once comprehended the state of affairs, and sprang up to offer his assistance.

They brought Hyacinth's mattress to the opening of the tent, so that their patient could have all the air that was possible, and this done, Mr. Hiram H. Jefferson took his departure. But, before going, he said to Hyacinth, with a most diabolical grin on his face:

"I say, mister, you air the very softest piece of dough that I ever came across, that's a fact. There

air not many such tarnation fools as you going, I guess. But 'tis all the same tew the poor cuss inside there, for I kin see that he's a gone 'coon, and no mistake." And once more giving Hyacinth's hand a most energetic shake, he went away.

Dillon had soon reason to congratulate himself on his promptitude, for next day his patient was delirious. There were many phases in his delirium, and many a scene long past and gone rose up again before his mind. At one time he was once more a boy at school, and another time he was going away for the vacation, and bidding farewell to his companions. Soon he was at home, and had another companion, not a boy this time, but a little sister that he called Sydney, and they were in a boat on a lake, or gathering nuts in the woods. By-and-by his imagination would take a different turn, and he was passionately imploring forgiveness for some crime he had committed, or thought that he had. Sometimes it was his sister, and sometimes an uncle, and at the feet of these two he cast himself in his delirium, many times in the day, beseeching them to forgive him for all the sorrow and shame that he had brought upon them.

The two men on whose kindness he had been so suddenly cast, nursed him in turn as long as it was

absolutely necessary that he should not be left alone, and if there was some awkwardness and want of technical skill in their mode of nursing, it was amply made up in kindness and tenderness. Not many things fit for an invalid could be had in that wild, rough place, but they got for him the best they could. They had plenty of tea and mutton broth, and as luck would have it, plenty of grapes and oranges were just then to be sold by an enterprising Yankee pedlar, newly come to the gold-fields. It was touching to see how naturally the two great bearded men took to the rôle of nursing, and how soon they learned to become expert in their new task. They were patient and tender with him, and thought nothing was a trouble that helped to give him ease, or soothe his pain. They often walked long distances to get a little white bread or a bottle of good wine for him, as soon as he began to mend, and had nothing worse to contend with than extreme physical weakness and mental depression. The first could be dealt with, and made to yield to suitable treatment and generous food, but the latter was more obstinate, because more intangible and more deeply rooted. The prospect of renewed life and health gave him no pleasure, and he regarded the future without hope, a strange feeling indeed for one

so very young. There was no elasticity about him, nothing of the natural rebound of returning health. As may well be supposed, recovery, accompanied by such a morbid state of thought and feeling, was both difficult and slow.

CHAPTER X.

A CONFESSION.

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

"You have been very good to me, Dillon," said the ailing youth to Hyacinth, one day that they were alone. "I often heard the Scriptural story of the good Samaritan, but I could never realise the truth of it until, in a happy hour for myself, I met with you and Pat."

The day was Sunday, on which, according to their usual custom, our "partners" had struck work. The weather being very fine, Pat had gone off to amuse himself; but Dillon remained with his sick guest, and amused himself in his own fashion by looking over an odd volume of Shakespeare, the dilapidated state of which showed that it had gone through much service. Now and again he laid down the book, to give his patient a little wine-and-water, that lay near

on an old box that, turned bottom upwards, did duty for a table.

"You are not attending to me," continued Brown. "You don't care to hear your own praises, and in that respect you are rather singular."

"I beg your pardon," said Dillon, laying down his book. "What was it you were saying? I was so much absorbed by the woodland scenery of 'As You Like It,' that I quite forgot I was in hot and dusty California, instead of the sylvan beauty of the forest of Arden."

"Put by Rosalind and Orlando for a little. There is a melancholy Jaques here, that would like to have a little conversation with you, if you would not object."

This request was so unusual, that Hyacinth laid by the book altogether. "Go ahead, old fellow; you spoke in good time, for I was just beginning to doze, and a little conversation may take the cobwebs out of my eyes."

"I think, Dillon, that I am going to die."

"And I think that you are not going to do any such foolish thing. On the contrary, you are getting on famously, and there is not the slightest symptom of death about you that I can see. So put that notion altogether aside."

"Nevertheless, I have a presentiment that I am not far from the end. Some philosophers say, that those who are soon to die see many things that healthy people, whose lives are all before them, never see at all. Now, I can see the end coming; but when, where, or how, I cannot see."

"My good fellow, you are weak from illness, and as a natural consequence, are talking perfect rubbish, which you will help me to laugh at very heartily this day month."

"Don't think for a moment that I cling to life," pursued Brown, "or am in the least troubled because the sands in my glass are running down so quickly. Take up the book again, and read aloud what Orlando says of himself, when he is advised not to strive with the professional wrestler. That passage might have been written for me, as it suits me exactly."

Hyacinth took up the book again, and read aloud:

"'If I be foiled, there is one shamed that was never gracious; if killed, but one dead that is willing to be so. I shall do my friends no wrong, for I have none to lament me; the world no injury, for in it I have nothing; only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty.'"

The boy repeated the passage word for word

after Hyacinth, and there was such utter hopelessness in his voice, such deep despair and sorrow in his face, that the kind heart of his auditor ached to hear him.

"Why will you indulge in such morbid, unwholesome fancies?" he said gently. "You are retarding your recovery by it, and leaving yourself no chance of health and strength. Cultivate a more hopeful spirit; and some day — sooner perhaps than we expect—you and I shall be leaving this wretched place behind us, and making our way home to the dear old country."

"I shall never see England again!" cried the poor young fellow, bursting into tears. His sobs became more violent every moment, until at last Hyacinth got seriously alarmed. He soothed the poor, weak, hysterical creature as well as he could, clasped his thin hand, and wiped the damps from his clammy brow.

"Oh, forgive me!" cried Brown, when the paroxysm had subsided, "but I am fearfully weak and nervous."

"No doubt you are, but you are not going the best way about getting strong again. You must try to avoid everything that would have the effect of exciting you in this way. And until

you are much better than you are now, I shall not permit you to talk in this way again."

"Look here, Dillon, you are the only one that has spoken a kind word to me for many a day; that showed me any Christian kindness, or seemed to care whether I lived or died. I was unknown to you, and you took me on trust. I was perishing, and you have saved my life. There is only one other on the earth's wide surface, that would do what you have done for me, and she, poor girl, is far away, dragging out a sad and laborious life, because of me. I would like very much that you would write to her when I am gone. Will you do that much for me, old fellow? Here are her name and address," and as he spoke he drew an old tattered pocket-book from the breast of his coat, and gave it to Dillon. "Do not open it until after my death, and deliver the enclosures as directed when you go home, for you *will* be going home one of these days. It won't put you very much out of your way, for she lives near London. Do you promise me?"

"I promise."

"That is enough. I may consider the thing done. And now, having gone so far, I think it is only right to tell you who and what I really am.

I suppose you knew from the first that my real name was not Brown."

"Well, I suspected as much."

"No. My real name is Dacre, and I am one of a very grand old family, the Dacres of Northumberland. I don't look very like that just now! Eh? But I am as well off as I deserve to be, for if I only got my due, I would be at this moment in a convict prison!"

"You! My dear boy, you are not quite well yet, and the delirium is hanging about you still."

"I am *not* delirious, but as sane as you are, and all I am saying is perfectly true. Oh! would to God it were only a frightful hallucination! But it is all true, as true as that the blessed sun is shining outside there. I am no boy either, though I look so young; I was twenty-three years old on my last birthday."

"I would never have supposed it. You don't look to be more than nineteen."

"It is the case, nevertheless. I am old enough to have as much sense as would have kept me from coming to lay my bones in California; old enough to have broken the hearts of all my family; old enough to find myself at twenty-three, a disgraced and beggared man, by my own act."

"Pray do not excite yourself in this way," said Dillon, alarmed by his vehemence. "It can do no good, nor change the past, whatever it may be."

"Right you are, old fellow; nothing can do me any good, either now, or at any future time. I am long past that, you see. But give me a drink, please, for my lips are parched; not water, but brandy, if you have any, for I shall want all the strength I can get, before my story is told."

Hyacinth gave him half-a-glass of brandy, in a tumbler of water.

"I have nothing very new to tell you, Dillon," he went on, after a little time. "I believe my story is a common one, now-a-days. My father was next brother and heir to Sir Ralph Dacre, of The Elms, who was a confirmed old bachelor, and a chronic invalid. When my father died, which was when I and my only sister were mere children, Sir Ralph stepped into his shoes, as it were, and brought us to live with him, at his grand old place in the far north. He got the most expensive governesses for Sydney, and sent me to Eton; treating us in all respects as if we were his own children. It was a brilliant future that lay before me, as the future baronet, and owner of a

fine old unencumbered estate, but I was not equal to it, nor worthy of it. You smile at that, but when I go on a little farther, you won't smile at all.

"When school and college days were over, my uncle got me a commission in a crack cavalry regiment, settling a very handsome allowance on me, to support the position that he thought his nephew and heir was entitled to hold. Better, oh! far better for me and for all of us, if he had kept me at home as his gamekeeper, or even as a helper in his stables! Then I would not have broken his heart, nor disgraced the old name and family that he was so proud of.

"From the moment I entered the army, my downward course began. I had neither the common sense to act for myself, nor the moral principle to avoid evil company, but blindly followed the example of many of my brother officers, men who were very wild and dissipated. I don't say they were all that, but many were, and unfortunately those were the men that I admired, and attached myself to. They drank deep, and played high, and went in for every folly and extravagance. They were like me, fresh from home, free from every salutary and restraining influence, and not much troubled by scruples of any kind. I

was foolish enough to take one or two of the worst of them as my models and companions, and to think that I could not do better than follow in their footsteps. I soon learned to drink, not that I loved drink for its own sake, but because I thought it like a sneak not to do what they did, and I took so kindly to gambling, that in a very short time I found the handsome allowance given me by my uncle, was wholly inadequate to meet the debts I had contracted at the card-table. I took to the turf, too; it was the right thing, they said, for a Dacre of the North, and as you may suppose, I found myself before very long weighted with debts that I had no earthly means of paying. I tried to stave them off as long as I could, but my creditors — the chief of whom were my brother officers—became so pressing, that I saw plainly that unless I could manage to pay up, I should leave the regiment in disgrace. So I went down to The Elms, and made a clean breast of it to Sir Ralph. The old man, who had lived for the greater part of his life in solitary state, was perfectly astounded at the magnitude of my liabilities, and was grieved to think that one of his name and race could have entered, while yet so young, upon such a career of folly and vice. But he paid the money—every shilling of it, mind—and I was once more a free

man, and able to hold up my head with the consciousness that I owed no man anything.

"'Harry, my lad,' he said, when I went to his bedside on the morning I left The Elms to take leave, and thank him for all his goodness, 'you are now straight again; take care that you keep so. I shall not do this thing a second time, be sure of that. Before you leave me now, you must give me your solemn promise as a gentleman, and a Dacre, that you will neither bet nor gamble any more. That is not a very large equivalent for *you* to give for all the money *I* have given to clear you, and you should be glad to get off so cheaply.'

"I gave the promise that the good old man required, and would you believe it, Dillon, I broke it before that very week was out!"

Hyacinth started involuntarily.

"You are horrified, Dillon, and no wonder; but there is still worse than that to be told. I don't think that in those days I was wicked all round, but I was very weak and fickle, and with no stability of character. The consequence was that I was easily led, either for good or evil, and unfortunately the people with whom I was mixed up, and whose example I followed, were evil to the core, and tried to make me like themselves in all things. I had now

and then some qualms of conscience, but they went for nothing when opposed to the powerful influence that was daily brought to bear on me. I sunk gradually lower and lower down, losing all mastery of myself in the frightful descent, until at last I fell into the hands of people that could make me do anything they chose. It was not my brother officers now—for the very worst of *them* was a gentleman—but card-sharpers and blacklegs of the very lowest class. They led me on, weak, senseless fool that I was! step by step, until at last my debts had accumulated to such an enormous sum, that I went for help to the Jews, and got it! I was the nephew and heir of Sir Ralph Dacre, of The Elms, who was old and infirm, and in the course of nature could not last very long. But going to the Jews did not, as you may suppose, mend matters in the least, for sixty per cent. interest on money would soon swamp an income much larger than I possessed. I could not meet a tithe of the demands that were made on me, to say nothing of my current expenses in a fast regiment; I was beset on every side by creditors whose name was legion, and who were as pitiless as they were importunate. I was without a friend in the world who would advise, or stretch out a hand to save me, and I became desperate. In an hour of mad-

ness—for I must have been mad then—I forged my uncle's name for ten thousand pounds!"

The wretched young man, overcome by the recollection of his crime, covered his face with his meagre hand, and big drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

"You despise me now that you know what manner of man I am in reality," he resumed—"unprincipled, ungrateful, heartless."

"No, not that," replied Dillon gently, for how could he break this poor bruised reed?—"only weak, and carried away by evil example. You were led on to the edge of a terrible precipice, blindfold as it were, and so swiftly hurried over the brink, that you had no time to think until you found yourself engulfed in the abyss of ruin below. You know the proverb, 'Facilis descensus Averni.'"

"I found it easy enough, at all events. Had I then such a friend as you, I should have a different story to tell to-day. I could have been led to good as easily as to evil; but I had no friend, and I was lost."

"Did Sir Ralph pay the money?"

"No. He was perfectly frantic when the forged bill was presented to him for payment, and most emphatically declared that the signature to it was not

his, or written with his knowledge. He swore a fearful oath that he never would pay one farthing, and that he would go into the witness-box to prosecute the forger who had dared to put his name to such a document. That very night he executed a will leaving everything that was in his power, or could separate from the title and estates, that were strictly entailed, to a distant cousin, another Dacre, and a poor curate with a long family. The will was not many days executed when he was seized with a fit; but lived on for some weeks, if that could be called living, when the mind was destroyed, and nothing was left but the animated clay."

"Was the money ever paid?"

"Yes, by my sister."

"Your sister!"

"Aye. Did I not tell you that I had a sister? There were but the two of us—she and I. She was two years my junior, and lived with Sir Ralph at The Elms. She was not beautiful, only what people called a pretty girl; but she had the true beauty, that of a lofty soul, and a warm, generous heart. She had in her own right ten thousand pounds, the sum fixed on for younger children in our parents' marriage settlements, and as she was the only child beside me, she was entitled to the whole of it. She had just

attained her majority, and was the uncontrolled mistress of this money, and to save her father's son from figuring in the dock of a public court, and his name from public infamy, she gave it up to pay this accursed bill!"

"She was a noble woman!"

"Noble! Oh, my God!" He uttered a low, bitter cry, so full of despair, of intense anguish, that Hyacinth saw that all attempts at verbal consolation would be quite useless. But he held the hot, thin hand between his own, and softly wiped away the damps that perpetually were bursting out on the hollow temples.

"You must not talk any more to-day," he said after a while; "you can tell me the rest at another time."

"Well, there is not much more to tell. Sydney's having paid the money saved me from a criminal prosecution, and I took my passage in a ship bound for Australia, as I could not stay any longer in England. But the very day before the ship sailed, my foot slipped on a bit of orange-peel in the street, and I was taken to the nearest hospital with a broken leg. Accordingly the *Céleste* sailed without me, and every one thought I had sailed in her, for when I was taken to the hospital, I gave my name as Brown, which I

have borne ever since. Before I could be discharged from the hospital, an account came to England that the *Céleste* had been burned at sea, and only a few persons had been saved by a passing ship, who knew nothing of me, and could tell nothing. I was glad that my identity was so completely lost, as it enabled me to sink out of the eye of the world, as if I had gone down in the blazing wreck, for I felt that I could never hold up my head as Harry Dacre in any civilised land. My uncle died soon after the news of the loss of the *Céleste* arrived in London, and as it was supposed I had perished with the rest, my cousin, the poor curate, reigned in my stead. The poor parson had for many years fought a hard battle with poverty, and it must have been a pleasant surprise to the honest man when he found himself master of a fine estate, and was called Sir John. He is a good man, I believe, and will do more credit to the old name than I ever would have done; certainly he will do it no dishonour. So you see it was all as it should be in the end."

"And your sister?"

"She is a governess in the house of a retired soap-boiler at Clapham! What do you say to that, Dillon? Sydney Dacre, with her old blood, her refined mind, and brought up in all the luxury of her uncle's house,

being a sort of upper servant to the soap-boiler's cubs! Of course she had to leave her old home when Sir Ralph died, and Sir John came to reign in his stead, and set about earning her own bread. And I, her own mother's son, was the one who had brought her to that!"

"But you could have remedied all that, by making your appearance, and claiming your rights as the next baronet. Your sister would not have had to leave her home, nor need you be here digging for gold."

"I'd have been sold up in three months, for I owed more than what I would inherit twenty times over. My uncle had left everything he could will away from the title, to the parson, and all that would come to me would be but a drop in the ocean of my debts. No, that would never do; it is far better as it is."

"But at least you let your sister know that you were not one of the passengers of the *Céleste*?"

"I did not. What would have been the use? She had gone through the horror of thinking I had perished in the burning ship. That was past, and done with. To inform her that I still lived, and was in England, would, I thought, answer no purpose but to open up afresh the wounds that were beginning to heal, and bring back to her mind the old shameful story. She would be worrying

herself about me, without having the power of helping me, for she had already given me her all. I sometimes think with you, that all this was wrong. It may be so, I cannot tell, for my head gets confused now and then; but when I am gone, old fellow, you will go to her, and tell her the truth. If you stay here long, write to the poor child; but if you have any prospect of being able to go home soon, I would prefer that you should give her the pocket-book, and the little parcel that accompanies it, with your own hands."

"I shall make it my business to do so; set your mind at rest on that point."

"A thousand thanks. I have now told you my whole sad, shameful story, and I am glad that I did, though you cannot know what it has cost me to do so. But your kind sympathy constrained me, in a manner, to do so, and be open and frank with you, as you deserved I should be. I could not bear to sail under false colours in your ship. What the rest of the world may think or say of me, is of no moment to me. No one in the world can judge me more hardly than I judge myself."

"I thank you for the confidence you have reposed in me," said Dillon, "and you may be sure that I shall respect it. Not even to Pat Flanagan will I

ever give a hint of your true story. Pat is a right good fellow, and as true as steel, but he loves a little bit of gossip in his soul; and that being the case, it is just as well not to burden him with a secret that he may not be able to keep. It would be bursting out of him at every pore, and quite unknown to himself, it would come forth at last."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST OF HARRY DACRE.

In the fairest sunshine a shadow chases us; in the softest music there is a tone which chides.

TIECK.

HYACINTH DILLON and his partner—or "boy," as Pat persisted in calling himself—had now been at the gold-fields for some months, working as men who went out there *should* work, if their purpose was at all real and earnest; but as yet their efforts had produced no great results. They had got some gold-dust, and at rare intervals a tiny bit of solid gold, so very small as not to be of much value. But finding those little bits gave the toilers fresh hope and courage, and animated them to renewed efforts. Their young guest was now well enough to be left alone for the greater part of the day, and this enabled them to devote themselves more entirely to their work than they had done while he was so ill. They had by this

time excavated so deeply, that they were almost hidden from the view of those who were walking on the level ground above. They scrambled down to the bottom of this pit, and out of it again as best they could, leaving their tools behind them when leaving every night. During fine weather they were pretty well off, for then their "claim" was dry; but when rain fell, it became full of water, in which they worked, up to the ankles or knees, as the case might be. Sometimes the pit got so full of water that they had to bale it out, and this was weary work, and attended with much suffering. But they did not lose heart, but worked on as if they were iron men, and not made of the ordinary flesh and blood. Hyacinth persevered, because he had a settled conviction, which grew stronger every day, that the "claim" was rich in gold, if they could only penetrate to it, and Pat persevered because he would not desert his master, or allow him to suppose that all this unfruitful, thankless labour could be able to dissolve their partnership.

But the time came at last—truly it had been long in coming—when the golden dream became a palpable and positive reality. They arose one morning, poor in all but health and hope, and when the night fell, they found themselves rich beyond all

that their wildest imaginations had ever pictured. They had come upon the gold at last, not in dust, nor in the little bits scarcely larger than the grains of dust, but in a great solid lump, or rather lumps, for before they could scoop it out of the earth in which it lay imbedded, it was unavoidably broken in several places, the very smallest fragment forming in itself a very respectable nugget. Long as they had hoped for this good fortune, and hard as they had worked for it, they were perfectly bewildered by its magnitude. Neither spoke to the other, when, after a long day of incessant labour, they had disinterred the mass of glittering metal, but they gazed on it lying at their feet, as if they were in a dream from which they feared to awake, lest they should find their treasure gone. Pat was the first to find his tongue.

"Hurroo! Ould Ireland for ever!" he cried, or rather shouted, throwing down the spade on which he had leaned, in the first moment of his great amazement. "Oh yarra! to the divil I pitch California an' all the hard work I ever done in it. Blast the spade I'll ever take in my hand agin, till I git home to Castle Cloyne!"

Hyacinth extended his hand, hard and sore from incessant toil, and as he grasped that of Pat,

said in a voice overflowing with cordiality and happiness: "Neither in Castle Cloyne, nor in any other place, shall you ever handle a spade again, Pat Flanagan, unless indeed it may be for your own amusement and pleasure."

"I hope, sir, that you're not goin' to part wid me, now that you're so rich," said Pat in dismay. "I'd feel it very quare intirely to be obleeged to look out now for another situation."

"You shall never again be servant to any one, Pat, but you will be my friend and true comrade, as you have been for many a long and weary day."

"Eyeh, Masther Hy'cinth! sure 'tis your own goodness, sir, that makes you say so."

"Half this gold is yours," continued Dillon, "well and fairly earned by your own hard toil. When we go home to Ireland, you can purchase a fine property, and live in clover for the rest of your life."

"By your lave, sir, 'tis nothing ov the kind. 'Tis all ov it your own, for sure I'm only your boy, the same as when we wor at home in Castle Cloyne. I hired wid you on boord the ship, if you recollect, an' you agreed to give food an' wages for my service, the same as I had from the poor ould masther

at home. But as for sharin' the goold, or settin' up for bein' an estated gintleman on the strength ov it, I'd have no call to that sort ov thing at all. I'm a dacent honest boy, sir, an' won't lay claim to what's not my own, though it is a thing that you're good enough to say that I have a share ov it. But when I said that I'd pitch hard work to the ould *dhunnus* for evermore, I meant that I'd go home wid you to the ould ground, the same as when we came out ov it, and be your servant boy all through. Oyeh! what else? Maybe you'd give me a good farm on the estate when you buy it back agin, as in coorse you will, plase God. That's what would shuit me, an' not an estate, that's not fit for me, nor the likes ov me, but for born an' rared gintlemin like yourself."

"Well, Pat, we won't have any dispute about it, but share our prosperity as we shared adversity. What should I have done in this dreadful place without you?"

"Well, sir, if you remimber, I said that very thing to you when you wanted not to hire me at all, but come on here by yourself. Don't you recollect how I fairly forced myself on you? Sorra another thing it was."

"It was well for me that you did. You were right, and I was wrong; that is all I can say."

"Faix, 'tis well that you own to it. An' Miss Grace, sir, the darlint ov the world! Won't herself be proud to see us walkin' in to her, wid dhrums batin' an' colours flyin'; an she'll be misthriss wanst more in Castle Cloyne, only a dale grander an' richer than she was before. Eyeh! her namesake, ould Grania Uaile, was never half so great or so grand as what she'll be, plase God!"

"Miss Grace shall have her share of that gold, Pat, never fear. And good old Father John, and Mr. Macnamara also. I fear they were often hard set, since you and I saw them last. But is there no one *you* would like to share with? Is there no pretty girl you would like to make mistress of the farm you are always wishing for?"

"Sorra wan, sir," replied the poor fellow, a shade of sadness coming over his face. "I never cared but for wan girl, an' she wouldn't have me, *foreer!*"

"That, I suppose, was Oonagh MacDermott. She was Miss Grace's foster-sister, and often came to see her. She was not merely a pretty girl, but downright beautiful."

"Thrue for you, sir, she was that same, an' a rale good girl along wid it. But where's the use ov talkin'? an' I wouldn't spake ov it to any wan, barrin' yourself. But I never forgot her, an' I never will."

They remained a long time conversing in this way, for Dillon thought it better not to take the gold out of the pit until night had set in. But while talking in this light, unsuspicious way, they had an auditor that they little suspected. This was the American who called himself Jefferson, although many a person at the diggings said that he had borne various other names before he came to California. He had been prowling about, according to his usual custom, in expectation of seeing or hearing of "something to his advantage," when his attention was attracted by the glad shout with which Pat Flanagan had "pitched hard work to the devil." His instinct told him that such a joyful exclamation could have proceeded but from one cause, and that the workers at the bottom of the pit must have come upon a vein of gold. Determined to satisfy himself on this point, he crept to the edge of the pit, in profound silence, and throwing himself flat on the earth that had been flung out of it, so as not to be seen by those below, he listened, with his whole soul in his ears, to every word they said.

When darkness had completely set in, Dillon and Pat, who had before that put all their gold into an old sack used for various purposes, clambered up out of the pit with weary bodies, but spirits that were high and glad. They lost no time in bringing their treasure to the tent, where they found young Dacre very anxious, on account of their prolonged absence. He was both amazed and rejoiced when they told him the cause of their long delay, and, opening the sack, showed him its rich glittering contents. He had never seen so much gold in its unrefined state, nor had the others either, and none of them could form a conjecture of its real value. They only knew that it must be very great, and that not many who had come to the gold-fields had got so rich a prize there, but of its marketable value they had not the smallest idea.

For a long time they were all too much excited to think of sleep, and, after a hasty supper of broiled mutton, "damper," and tea, their usual fare, they sat talking until it was pretty late in the night. Then Nature asserting her rights in her usual peremptory fashion, Hyacinth and Pat went to the extreme end of the tent where they always slept, taking the precaution of bringing the sack containing the gold with them, while Dacre remained on his own mattress near

the entrance, for the advantage of being nearer to the fresh air outside.

The night was very still and sultry, and excited by the wonderful event of the day, and not having yet got back his strength, Harry Dacre lay awake, tossing restlessly from side to side, while every nerve and sense were strained almost to fever pitch. Many thoughts, and none of them pleasant ones, marched in procession through his mind at that solemn midnight hour. There are few people so fortunate as to be able to look back on their past lives without remorse, or at best regret, and he certainly was not in the list of that happy few. His misspent life, old in folly though young in years; the crime he had committed in a moment of madness; and the dreadful consequences that had resulted from it, not only to himself, but to his family, rose up before his mental vision in all their darkness and deformity. In the cheerful light of day, the whisperings of conscience, "that voice of God within," may be ignored and stifled; but in the deep calm and holy silence of night, it makes itself heard with a persistence and importunity that cannot be evaded, and with a force that bears down all before it, with a stern and irresistible eloquence.

And now, he was about to lose the only friend that

he had left. The man who had been so kind to him, who had nursed him in sickness, and had had compassion on him in his sore need; who had not scorned or turned away from him on hearing his disgraceful history; this one true friend that God had raised up for him in a strange land, this friend would soon be lost to him. He would go away, to enjoy in his own country the fruits of his honest labour and perseverance. He would of course leave California, and they would never meet on earth again. This was a bitter thought; but more bitter still was that of feeling his own inability to show this true friend the great gratitude that filled his heart, before they were separated for ever; of proving to this good Samaritan that the man who had fallen among thieves, been grievously wounded, and would have perished but for his great charity and kindness, was not ungrateful.

In these dreary musings the night wore on, and after some time, he thought he heard something like the suppressed breathing of a wild animal before it darts upon its prey. Slowly and silently he raised himself on one elbow, in order to be ready for a spring, and with every faculty strained to its utmost tension. The gloom was so profound that at first he could see nothing, though he felt that some living

creature, either human or animal, had got into the tent. When his eyes had become more accustomed to the gloom, he was able to see that some dark body was creeping stealthily along; a little longer, and he saw that this dark body was a man, who was step by step approaching the two unconscious sleepers at the end of the tent. Dacre almost held his breath in the greatest astonishment, though he at the same time stood upright, ready for the spring that he saw now was inevitable. There was none of the weakness of recent illness about him now; all his energies seemed to be preternaturally sharpened, and all the strength of a strong man infused into his wasted frame, as if by a miracle. He saw the robber—there could be no doubt whatever of his intention—glide noiselessly to where the bag containing the gold lay, near the two sleeping men, and take it up, sling it over his shoulder, and then turn round with the hope of being able to depart as silently as he had come. This was Dacre's time for action. He sprang forward, shouting, "Villain, robber, I know you!" and threw himself on the thief with such a sudden fierceness, that he was thrown violently to the ground by the unexpected shock.

The shout and the noise of the subsequent scuffle at once roused the two sleepers. They started up, but

at first were so much confused and bewildered, that they could see nothing, and could only guess at what had occurred by the noise made by the two men who were struggling for mastery on the ground.

"Let me go, you tarnation fool, or I guess it'll be all the wuss for yourself. Let me go, I say, before I fire," cried Jefferson, who spoke as if he was half-strangled.

"Never, until you give up that bag," replied Dacre firmly. "Help, help! Dillon, Flanagan, awake, there is a robber here!" he shouted loudly.

"You *will* have it, then, you infernal cuss!" and as he spoke, or rather hissed these words through his set teeth, the noise of a pistol-shot resounded through the tent, that was followed by a piercing cry from the unfortunate youth.

By this time Pat had managed to strike a light, and at the first gleam, Hyacinth, being now sure of his mark, flung himself on the American, and with the grip of a giant held him fast.

"Oh, be the piper that played before Moses!" cried Pat, holding the light close to them, "'tis that infernal blaggard that spakes through his nose. Only for this poor boy that he fired on, like the mane dirty coward that he is, we'd be robbed an' murthered, an' kilt intirely, as sure as that my name is Pat!"

"Bring me the strong cord that's hanging at the end of the tent," said Hyacinth, with compressed lips.

"Oh Lord, Masther Hy'cinth, sure you're not goin' to hang him! Your father's son oughtn't to dirty his hands wid the likes ov *him.*"

"Right you are, Pat, but I shall take good care that the ruffian is hanged all the same. Help me to bind him firmly," and this Pat did with great alacrity, though he would not approve of the hanging.

"'Tis your turn now, boss," said the baffled miscreant, "and I guess that I have no mercy to expect from you, or any of ye. Damnation to the hull lot of ye!"

"Folly on," said Pat Flanagan coolly, as he surveyed the wretch lying bound and helpless on the ground, with an expression of intense satisfaction on his face, "folly on, an' give us a little more ov that *rámash,* will you? Hard words break no bones, is an ould sayin' in the place where I came from, an' a mighty thrue sayin' it is, sure enough. Now, my fine fella, if you remained at home in your own diggins to-night, fair an' aisy, instid ov prowlin' about to rob an' murther dacenter people than ever stud in the shoes ov your mother's son, you wouldn't

be starin' at me that a way like a stuck pig. I ought to beg the pig's pardon for comparin' him at all to the like ov you, the dirtiest an' manest blaggard I ever come across."

By this time Hyacinth had raised up the wounded boy, with as much ease as if he was but a child, and laid him on his mattress. Then he drew back the curtains of the tent, to give him air. The day was breaking in the east, and as its pale, wan light fell on the face of Dacre, it showed unmistakably that he was dying. He had been shot through the lungs, and life was ebbing away in short, painful gasps. Hyacinth—strong man as he was—shed bitter tears over the wasted face, while he wiped away the mingled blood and foam that oozed from the blue, quivering lips.

"Oh! my boy, my boy, it is for me you are dying!" he exclaimed in wild anguish. "To save that bag of dross, you have given your young life!"

"No, not for the gold," replied the dying lad with a great effort; "but to show you my love, and to prove that I am not ungrateful to you, and Pat, for all your kindness to so very poor and worthless a creature as I am."

"You have paid a very heavy price, Harry, for the very little we have been able to do for you."

"Ah! no. Death for once is kind, and my end is more worthy than was my life. When you go home, go to Sydney, and tell her—tell her"—the blood rushed so fast into his mouth, that he could say no more.

"Tell me, if you plase, Masther Hy'cinth, what I'm to do wid this murdherin' vagabone?" said Pat. "Though he's tied fast neck an' crop, I'm ralely onaisy in my mind, till we get shut ov him out ov our premises."

"Hush!" said Dillon in a solemn voice, while he raised a warning finger. A look of unspeakable softness and tenderness came over his face, making it for the moment almost woman-like. Then stooping down he kissed the forehead of the dead boy, as his own mother might have kissed it, and closed the eyes with reverent and gentle hand. Then he started up, and as he looked at Jefferson, every trace of softness and pity died out of his face.

"Miscreant — robber — murderer — look at your work!" he shouted. "He is dead, and slain by your hand."

"Waal, ef he is dead, he brought it on himself, I reckon. You can't deny that, mister, whatever way you fix it. I spose you mean to kill me, in revenge for what was only an accident."

"Me! I would think my hand was contaminated if it touched you. No, I shall leave you to the common hangman; he is the proper person to deal with you."

"Have mercy on me, boss!" whined the wretch, now utterly subdued and beaten down. "All I have is yours, ef you will only let me go."

"You are a coward, as well as a thief and murderer. All the gold in California could not buy your worthless life. It is forfeited to the law, and to the law I leave you."

The morning light was now streaming full into the tent, and Pat snuffed out the candle that he had lighted a short time before.

"Pat, go off at once in search of some of the Vigilance Committee, and bring one or more of them here with you," said Hyacinth. "Tell them what a dreadful murder has been committed here, and that we have fortunately secured the murderer. Make no delay, as I am anxious to have the brute removed from my tent as soon as possible. While he

draws the same air with me, I cannot breathe freely. I shall remain here to keep guard over him until your return. My task, however, will not be a very difficult one," he added, with a grim smile, "as his powers of locomotion are rather limited."

Pat went off on his errand, and the prisoner, seeing that no plea for mercy would soften the heart of his pitiless guard, spoke no more; but, with the mute doggedness of the dying wolf, awaited the inevitable doom that was very near now, with all the stoicism he could call to his aid. He was well aware that so far from getting any mercy from the Vigilance Committee, his sentence from that body would certainly be "a short shrift and a long cord." He had been taken red-handed after committing murder, and what was even a more heinous crime in the eyes of the wild officers of Judge Lynch, he was an idle loafer who had been caught in the act of stealing gold, the fruit of another man's hard and long-continued toil. Judge Lynch was not master of much law, in a technical sense, nor was his court one in which good manners went hand-in-hand with polite speech, nor the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re.* But his ideas on the subject of *meum* and *tuum* were generally pretty correct, and but for his administration of justice

—as swift as it was sharp—the gold-fields of California or Australia would be hells where neither life nor property would be safe, and where no man would dare to dwell.

CHAPTER XII.

FAREWELL TO CALIFORNIA.

And ye varlete bound upon a carte,
Was draggede to ye gallows high.
And ye knight rode out to see him die.

OLD ENGLISH BALLAD.

IN a very short time after the events occurred, that have been related in the last chapter, Hyacinth Dillon and his man Pat found themselves on board the vessel that was to take them back to Europe. It was with feelings of the utmost joy and satisfaction, that both bid adieu to that auriferous Western land, to which they had come poor, and left rich beyond all that they could have imagined in their wildest dreams. The hard life of great privation and incessant labour; the wild, half-savage population, of which drunkards, thieves, bullies, and rowdies of every description, formed so large a part; all was so entirely different from anything to which

they had been accustomed at home, disgusted them and made them very glad indeed when they could leave it all behind them. Dillon had borne it all well and patiently, as long as there was no remedy, but from the hour in which he had come upon the gold vein, his anxiety to get out of the country became a perfect passion, concentrating all his thoughts, his energies, and feelings, into one groove, to the total exclusion of all others, with only one exception.

That one exception was the loving, tender memory of the unhappy youth, who had lost his life in saving the property of his benefactor, and to show him that his kindness to the "stranger he had taken in," had not been thrown away. Short a time as Hyacinth had known him, he had learned to love him, and to discern the germs of much good in his nature, notwithstanding the grave errors—to put it in the mildest way—that he had committed. He had expiated those errors very dearly, and had paid a heavy penalty for the crime of a moment of madness. But with all the instability and weakness of his character, his heart was affectionate and grateful, and nervously sensitive to the slightest touch of kindness or sympathy. Under happier circumstances, he would have been a most lovable creature, but

with all his regret for him, Hyacinth felt that the best fortune had come to him, and that the nameless grave in which he had been laid, was the only asylum where he could find peace and rest. He had been already dead to all who had ever known, or cared for him; home and fortune, and even his own name, were all lost. He could never again return to the civilised world whose laws he had so recklessly violated. Haunted by that

> Sorrow's crown of sorrow,
> The memory of happier days;

weighed down, night and day, by remorse of conscience; with nothing bright or happy to look forward to, and with nothing in the present but want and toil, to which he was altogether unequal, death had indeed come to him with the face of a friend!

Very speedily the wild justice of the gold-fields had sent the murderer to his well-earned doom. After having given his evidence before the Vigilance Committee, Hyacinth would have left the country at once, but to his great astonishment, Pat demurred to this hasty proceeding.

"I thought, Pat, that you were very anxious to get back to Ireland," he said.

"Thrue for you, sir, I am; but the year is long, an' we can take our time at it."

"Well, if you talk of time, we have spent enough of it here, in all conscience. I hate this place, and am anxious to leave it. I am, I confess, very home-sick, and have been so from the first; but there was no use in complaining or giving way until we had the means of going back again, and of living at home in comfort and independence. And now that we have secured that means, I think that I never can get soon enough out of this beastly place."

"Begor, sir, you're not a bit fonder ov the ould sod, nor gladder to get back to it, than what I am myself. The very first look I get ov the green woods ov Castle Cloyne, will warm the cockles ov my heart! But what's the good ov hurryin' any man's horse in the hate ov the day?"

"Pat, you must have some motive for staying here, that I cannot understand," said Dillon, "and if so, you have only to declare it. I can wait for a few days for your convenience, if you wish it; and, on the other hand, if you choose to remain in this country and settle in it, I shall give you your fair share of what you have fairly earned."

"To go home without me; is that what you mane, sir?" said Pat, with an expression on his countenance,

half of astonishment, and half genuine distress. "Be the piper that played before Moses! you'll do nothing ov the sort. We come out here together, an' we'll go home together, or I'll know the rason why. Oh, blood alive! what would Father O'Rafferty an' Misther Macnamara say, if I was to let you go such a long journey by yourself, afther all the years I was in your father's house. 'Take great care ov that boy, Pat,' ses Misther Mac to me at the Election, 'an' remimber that he's the last ov an ould stock,' ses he, 'so be sure you bring him home safe to his father. You're a studdy boy, Pat,' ses he, 'so I know I can depind on you to stand by him.' He said a dale more that's gone clane out ov my head, an' so did the priest likewise; but sure, 'tis all wan now what they said, for though I forget the words, I don't forget the manin' ov 'em at all."

Hyacinth burst out into a hearty laugh at the droll idea of Pat having constituted himself his guardian.

"Begor, sir, I'm proud to see you so pleasant; more power to you! Well, now, I'll tell you why I want to stay for another day or two. 'Tis just that I want *to see the hangin'*."

"Can it be possible, Pat, that so brutal a sight could give you any pleasure? I would not have believed it."

"Throth, thin, you may, for 'tis as thrue as that I'm tellin' it to you. 'Tis roasted alive at a slow fire he ought to be, instid ov hanged, the villyan ov the world! for hangin' is a dale too aisy a death for the likes ov him, that first thought to rob us, an' then kilt the poor fellow that took our part. Sure enough, 'tis myself that'll see him hanged wid all the pleasure in life. By your lave, Masther Hy'cinth, I'll have the great consolation ov seein' that infernal ruffin walkin' in his own funeral, an' dancin' a hornpipe on nothing at all, to the ould tune ov the Rogues' March. See if I don't!"

And, as if to give greater force and expression to his declaration, Pat burst out into the concluding verse of a slang song that was written by Curran on the execution of Jemmy O'Brien the informer, and which at the time of the Union was very popular among the lower classes in Dublin.

> Then the hangman he pulled down his cap,
> And turned his mug towards the Liffey,
> And down fell the lafe ov the slap,
> And he died wid three kicks in a jiffey.

"Pat, you are a perfect savage!" exclaimed Hyacinth, in great indignation and disgust.

"May be so, sir. You have the best right to know what I am, considerin' that we wor never

parted since we wor boys together, an' that wasn't istherday, nor the day before that, either."

"I'm sorry to have to give this against you, Pat, but in this instance, you resemble a Red Indian more than a civilised man."

"Wisha, good luck to you, Masther Hy'cinth, an' lay me alone. I have no patience wid you, for showin' so much feelin' for the blasted ruffin that would have us robbed an' murthered intirely, only for the dacent boy that lost his life for us; the light ov Heaven to his sowl this day! 'Tis a great wondher to me, sir, that you haven't more sinse. Be my sowl! 'tis no surprise to any wan that Misther Macnamara gave you in charge to me, tellin' me to keep a sharp eye on you."

"Well, have it your own way. You are as great a savage now, as you were when you were brought home to Castle Cloyne on a door, with your head broken, in consequence of heading a faction fight at the fair of Ballycross."

"See now, how well you remember that, sir," said Pat, with a broad grin. "Didn't we give it to the Donnellys that day; *thogum cionne*,* and no mistake."

* *Thogum cionne*—Literally "take care of my head," but intended to express, idiomatically, having the worst of the battle.

"I rather think it was all the other way. *You* got the *thogum cionne*, at all events, whatever the other party got, for you were brought home to us half-dead."

"So itself, sir. Sure we gev the Donnellys such a noble batin', that from that to this, they wor never able to rise a stick in fair or market. I don't know how they got on ov late," he added reflectively, "but sure, when we go home we'll hear all the news for nothing."

Next day the execution took place, for justice at the diggings was prompt and decisive, and after Pat Flanagan had afforded himself the "consolation ov seein' the hangin'," he announced his readiness to leave at once.

"He was a great villyan, that snufflin' vagabone, an' now that he's gone, I can't but own that he died game!" was Pat's epitaph on the defunct Mr. Jefferson.

All their simple preparations having been made, both master and man bade farewell for ever to the Golden State, where they had suffered much, but where on the other hand they had won fortune and independence. Their hearts were as light as the bag that contained their gold was heavy; they were young, buoyant in spirit, with robust health, and

with nerves and muscles hardened by toil and constant exposure to sun and wind. The ship in which they sailed was one of the best and fastest on the line, and her performance this time did not give the lie to her reputation. But she was all too slow for the eager hearts and straining eyes of the two happy young fellows, who were *going home.* At the sound of that sweet word *home,* all the toil and suffering, the suspense and the despair, were forgotten. In imagination Hyacinth saw himself the lord of Castle Cloyne, with the old property redeemed, the old house renovated, and Grace sitting in her usual place, presiding over the tea-table, as of old. Tony Fitzgerald should still be in the stables, but with several grooms under him to do all the hard work; for poor old Tony was not fit for much now, but give his orders, and smoke his pipe on the stone bench outside the stable-door. Neither should Tearaway do any more work. He would find out who it was that had bought his father's old hunter, and buy him back at any price. The paddock down by the river would be the place for Tearaway in the summer, and in the winter the cosiest corner in the stables. And what a pleasant night they would have together—Father John, poor old Terry, and himself! Christendom

could not furnish a happier trio than they would be. And in the joy of his heart the young fellow cried out, in the pathetic language of the Shunamite woman: "Henceforth, I dwell for ever among mine own people!"

Pat Flanagan, too, was not without dreaming his own dreams, and building his own castles in the air. For the present he would remain with "Masther Hy'cinth," and be after him, and his sister, the person of most consequence in Castle Cloyne, and regulating everything there according to his own ideas, without let or hindrance from anyone. He would once more swagger at weddings and wakes, and at fair and market be the leader of his faction against his old enemies the Donnellys. And in the far-off distance, when old age had at last overtaken him—now, in the abounding affluence of youth and health, that seemed a very distant time indeed—and he would be no longer able to "hould the stick," he saw himself the owner of a good farm and comfortable cottage on the Castle Cloyne estate. By this it will be seen that our friend Pat was not very ambitious. He had not been born great, was in no way capable of achieving greatness, and if greatness was thrust upon him, he would be in truth very much out of his element under such an intolerable burden. He would be

wise, though he could not be great; and be content with happiness, leaving greatness to those for whom it was better fitted, and who would wear it well and gracefully, because they had been to the manner born. It would be well for many restless and unquiet spirits, if they were as philosophic and as wise in their generation as Pat Flanagan, and, passing by the shadow—glittering and seductive as it looked—be content with the more homely, but more tangible substance.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMING HOME.

> She's gone and left me, and the place she filled
> In my heart is empty—empty. She has done
> Her travail, but my task is still to roam
> On through the world.
>
> BARRY CORNWALL.

IT was on a beautiful morning in early summer, that Hyacinth Dillon, from his seat on the vehicle that was popularly known in the district as the "mail car," beheld once more the green woods of Castle Cloyne. He and his "boy" Pat had arrived the night before at the nearest railway-station from Queenstown, or, as it was called in those days, the Cove of Cork, and at first he thought he should have to remain all night at the hotel. But on making inquiries there, he learned that the mail coach would pass about midnight, which would bring him to within twenty miles of Castle Cloyne, and the

rest of the journey he could make on the side-car that would be in waiting to take the mail, and carry it on to the country districts. His impatience to proceed was so great, that he at once abandoned the idea of taking a bed at the hotel and spending the night there. The weather was very fine, and the soft sweet air of the summer night on the top of the coach was very grateful to one who had endured being half roasted in the almost tropical heat of the last three months he had spent in that far distant land on the sunny shores of the Pacific.

Pat Flanagan parted company with his master, when the latter exchanged the roof of the coach for the side-seat of the mail car. The twenty miles Pat preferred going on foot, to stretch his legs, as he said, but in reality for the purpose of making sundry visits to such of his old friends and acquaintances as were living along the road, to hear all the news from them, and in return tell them of all his own marvellous adventures and great luck while living in "foreign parts." In adopting this agreeable way of travelling, he did not expect to reach Castle Cloyne for a few days, or probably for a much longer period. This programme, however, depended very much on the kind of reception he would get from his friends as he went along, and whether they would be glad to see

him, and demonstrative in their welcome, or the reverse.

As the mail car—a very primitive, battered-looking old vehicle, drawn by a pair of poor lean horses that appeared as if a feed of oats was a rare treat to them—went lumbering slowly along, Hyacinth had full opportunity of seeing the great change that had taken place in the country during the two years of his absence. The teeming population that had once made the air resound with the sounds of life and labour, was all gone. Mile after mile was passed over in the glad light of that summer morning, without a human creature becoming visible, for the Famine had done its appointed work with a resolute and masterful hand. For want of labourers, there was hardly any tillage to be seen, and the whole country seemed to have become one vast grazing-field, wholly given up to the use of cattle. Where Dillon had once known snug farm-houses, and little hamlets of a few houses grouped together, he saw nothing now but heaps of stones and rubbish, tumbled about in unsightly, lonely ruin. The country had been in a bad way when he left it two years ago, and his sister's letters had not prepared him for finding any material improvement on his return, but what he now saw as he drove along, was very much worse than

he had expected, and gave him a truer idea of the fiery ordeal through which the country had passed, than any verbal description could have conveyed.

When the car stopped at the little village of Castle Cloyne to deliver the mails, Hyacinth, having given the driver so large a "tip" as to make the poor half-starved, half-clad creature almost speechless with joyful surprise, walked to Father O'Rafferty's house, which was about a mile farther on. As he proceeded, he saw many persons were going in the same direction, and concluded that they were bound for some fair or market in the neighbourhood. None of them recognised him in the least, which was hardly a matter of surprise, for he was indeed greatly changed. The tall, slender youth had become a stately, well-developed man, whose proportions were all enlarged by constant exercise and labour. The upper part of his face was browned almost to swarthiness by the fierce action of the American sun, and the lower part was quite concealed by a full tawny beard. He was another manner of man now from the stripling that had left Castle Cloyne, but the change in his appearance had come on so gradually and imperceptibly that he did not know how great it was until now.

When he came to the little avenue leading up to the priest's house, he noticed with surprise that every-

one halted on arriving there, and as he came in sight of the hall-door he saw a good many persons lounging outside, as if waiting there for something, or some one.

"What is it has brought those people here, may I ask?" he said to a decent-looking old countryman. "Are they waiting for anyone?"

"For the funeral they're waiting, your honour. I see that the hearse isn't come yet; but it must be here soon now," was the answer.

"Whose funeral is it?"

"Why, thin, Miss Grania's. Maybe, sir, you didn't nappen to know her? Miss Grace Dillon, I mane. 'Tis a great pity, for she was very good and charitable, an', moreover, was a rale lady, every inch ov her, an' come ov the ould stock ov the country. All the land hereabout was the estate ov her family; fine, sperrited people they wor, an' 'twas aisy to live undher 'em. They had the full hand an' the warm heart for the poor an' the dissolute, ever an' always; ay, had they! an' 'twas a loss to the whole country when they wor broke, horse an' fut. Och mavrone! 'tis a new story, an' a quare wan, too, to have a hotel-keeper from London owning the estate of the ould Dillons ov Castle Cloyne!"

The old peasant, with the garrulity of age, would have rambled on in this strain much longer,

but that he saw his auditor become deathly pale, and lean as if for support against one of the piers of the gate.

"I'm in dhread, sir, that you're not well," he said kindly. "I'm sorry I told you about poor Miss Grania so sudden like. Maybe, you're a frind ov the family."

"It is nothing," replied Hyacinth, trying to recover himself. "I have been travelling all night, and am much tired."

"That would tire you, sir, surely. An' then if you knew the family, it would be no admiration in life that you'd feel a thrifle downhearted. They are all gone now, *foreer!* the Dillons, I mane. Miss Grania an' her brother wor the last ov 'em. He wint away to foreign parts, a good while back, poor boy! an' maybe 'tis dead *he* is this way, an' *she's* to be brought to-day to her long home!"

They had now arrived at the hall-door. The old man joined the people waiting outside, and Hyacinth, who felt as if his heart was turned to stone, entered the hall where Father O'Rafferty was giving some directions about the funeral. When he saw a strange gentleman, bronzed and bearded, come in, he came forward, saying courteously:

"Can I do anything for you, sir?"

"Oh, Father John! don't you know me?" burst from the heart of the poor young fellow. Though his outer man was so changed, his voice was still the same, and the priest recognised him the moment that he spoke.

"Oh, Hyacinth, my boy! My dear boy!" he exclaimed, extending both his hands, while his voice trembled with powerful emotion, "don't speak a word, but come in here out of this crowd," and he drew him gently into the little parlour, closing the door after them.

The unhappy young man sat down in silence, and resting his head on the arm of the sofa, burst into such a passion of sorrow, that it shook with the violence of his sobs. And as if to have nothing wanting to complete his misery, the wild, melancholy notes of the *keen* arose from the next room, shrill and piercing. The women were crying the death-chant for the last time, before the coffin should be borne from the house.

And this was Hyacinth Dillon's welcome home!

"I am better pleased than if fifty golden sovereigns were put into my hand, that you came home to-day," said the priest, "for I confess to you, that it grieved my old heart to think that not one of my poor child's own name and blood

would be here to-day to lay her in her last resting-place. She was so long ailing, that I hoped she would live until you came back. I knew well, that if you were a living man, you would come back, soon or late, to the old ground."

"Why did you not write to tell me how very ill she was? Oh, Father John! there were but the two of us in the wide world, and yet she died while I was so near. I never will forgive you for not having written to me; never, never!" cried he, almost frantic with grief.

"What good would that have done? What purpose would it have answered, but to make you miserable and restless, when you were thousands of miles away? Hyacinth, my boy, be reasonable, be a man, as your worthy father's son ought to be, and above all, be a Christian, and bow with submission to the will of God."

"Forgive me, father," said Dillon, extending his hand, which was affectionately grasped by the good old man. "I think I am half-mad, and I must needs vent my madness on my oldest and best friend."

"Tut, tut, boy, say no more about it. You were overcome for the moment, and surely that is not surprising. But the case might have been worse than it is. If you had not come to-day you could not

follow her remains to the grave, and this would be a source of lasting regret to both of us for the rest of our lives. And, Hyacinth, have no painful feeling of any kind on your mind with respect to her last hours. She was very peaceful and happy; the only wish she had ungratified was to see you once more. She had her foster-sister, Oonagh, to attend her, which she did with a love and watchful tenderness, which no professional nurse is capable of feeling; and she had every comfort she required, the same as if she was still in her father's house. This poor place was not like Castle Cloyne; but she was good enough to be satisfied with it, such as it was, and make herself happy there. She was a very sweet, amiable girl, and God, to crown her good and innocent life, gave her the greatest of all graces, a holy and a happy death."

"Before we start you had better eat something," said the priest, after a little. "I don't suppose you have had any breakfast, as you came by the mail car, and you must be fairly famished. I'll tell Bridget to get you some breakfast; I have had my own more than an hour ago."

"Thanks; but really I could take nothing now."

"Well, I dare say you have no great appetite; but Bridget will have a comfortable breakfast for us when we return from the churchyard in a couple of hours.

I'll have no objection myself to a second breakfast, for, like yourself, I had no great appetite for the one I went through the form of eating, just to keep in countenance all the gentlemen who came from a distance, and for whom breakfast was provided. We have no time now, anyhow, for I see they have brought out the coffin, and are putting it into the hearse. Oh, Miss Grace! my darling child!" cried the old man, unable, when he saw the coffin, to restrain his sorrow. "You brought sunshine with you into my poor house, and now you are taking it all away with you. Oh, Hyacinth! you cannot know what that gentle saint was to the poor, lonely old priest, since she came to keep me company. But she is now in heaven, and it is selfish of me to grudge her the bright crown that she is wearing there this day."

He wiped his eyes, and putting on his hat, drew it down over his brows, so that no one should see that he had been weeping. Then he took Hyacinth's arm, and they passed out of the house. By this time the coffin was in the hearse, and the driver on his seat ready to start as soon as the priest was seen leaving the house. There were a good many people of all classes and creeds, met to pay the last tribute of respect to one whose good and blameless life deserved that respect, and whose ancient lineage in some degree commanded

it. Not only were the country-people there—such of the old tenants on the Dillon estates as were still living—but the gentry also. Men whose fathers had sat with the Dillons at the social board, contended with them at the hustings, and grasped their hands wherever gentlemen were wont to meet.

A whisper had gone round that Hyacinth Dillon had arrived that morning; and when the rumour was confirmed by his appearance with the old priest on his arm, every man in the crowd silently raised his hat, partly in recognition, and partly as a manifestation of respect and sympathy. He flushed up for a moment as his eye lighted on many a familiar face, and he acknowledged the courtesy by raising his own hat, and looking round with a melancholy smile. Then he and the priest took their places immediately behind the hearse, and the funeral procession moved on slowly down the avenue.

More than two years before he had been the chief mourner in his father's funeral, and now again he was fulfilling the same sorrowful duty by his sister—the one ewe lamb of that father's flock. Henceforth he would be alone on earth, for he was the last of his race. He had worked hard for gold to redeem his father's property, and give a home to his sister, and now a London hotel-keeper was the owner of Castle

Cloyne, and *he* was following her to the grave. That was all that he could do for her now! She was beyond all human care, deaf and blind to every sound or sight of human love or sorrow. On his poor mattress on the clay floor of his tent, in the far-distant Golden State, he had pleased himself by thinking how happy he would one day make her—the poor ailing girl!—and how carefully he would shield her from every suffering and care. When he had found the vein of gold the time seemed insupportably long, until he could return to provide her with a home befitting her name and birth. He had come at last, and was now bringing her *home*!

When all was over at the graveyard, and the vault closed, the priest drew Hyacinth aside from the crowd, for, under a plain exterior, he had a good deal of tact.

"Let us go round by the other gate," he said; "there are many people here, and they would all be coming round, and doing their very best to upset you. It is rest and quietness you want for the rest of this day, and not excitement. The week is long for them to come see you, but this day they must leave you in peace. We will slip away quietly, before any one misses us."

Mechanically Hyacinth went with him, through a grassy path leading to a side entrance, at the other end of the churchyard. This entrance faced the parish church, and was the one used by people going to it, either to attend divine service, or for any other purpose, while the other entrance, which they were avoiding, was never opened but for funerals. Hyacinth was glad to avail himself of the priest's suggestion, and turn aside from the crowd.

But before they had arrived at the gate they were stopped by another procession, altogether different from that in which they had taken part. A marriage had been celebrated in the church, and just as they were passing the door, the bride came forth, leaning on her husband's arm, and looking radiant with happiness, youth, and beauty. The bridegroom wore the uniform of an artillery officer, and was wholly unknown to Hyacinth, but one glance enabled him to recognise the bride. It was Caroline Wilson, the woman he had once loved as his own soul. She was in his eyes the fairest woman he had ever seen, and now she was proving that she was as faithless as she was fair. Never had she looked so beautiful as she did now, in her trailing satin dress, and on her neck and arms gems that flashed and quivered with

her slightest motion. Her lovely face, shaded, but not concealed, by a long veil of the richest lace, was

> Kindled by a conscious glow,
> As from the thought of sovereign beauty born.

As the bride passed close to where Hyacinth stood, he raised his hat by a sudden impulse, and saluted her with a grave but courteous bow, while he fixed his eyes on her with an expression in them that she could not possibly mistake. In that gaze was recognition, was silent reproach, and above all, an expression of proud, cold, concentrated scorn. Changed though he was, she knew him at once. There was no mistaking the flash of his bright blue eyes, the withering contempt that filled them as they were fixed on her steadfastly. That gaze was too much for her, and she quailed visibly under it. The bright smile died out of her face, which became as pale as marble, and as if conscious of her own embarrassment, she put up her bouquet to hide it. But it was all over in a moment, and she swept on, followed by her train of bridesmaids and wedding guests, all laughing and talking gaily on their way to the gate.

"In trying to avoid Scylla, we have come upon Charybdis," observed Dillon with a smile.

"Well, my boy, we have survived it," replied the

priest, in as cheerful a tone as he could command. "It did not, I suppose, require the spectacle we have just witnessed to show you what stuff that young woman was made of. You found that out for yourself, you may remember; and all the better, I say. It is well to find out what people really are, even at the eleventh hour; and you may be very thankful, my lad, that you found *her* out before you had the great misfortune of being her husband. What a horrible fate it would be, to be tied for life to such a vain, silly, heartless thing as that woman is! Thank your stars, or rather the goodness of God, that you escaped that fate. Come, now, don't you agree with me?"

"Yes, fully. But I confess that until this moment I still cherished the hope of winning her, and was foolish enough to imagine that when I came home rich, her father would again consent to our marriage. I thought she would have been true to me, as I have been to her; have trusted in me, and waited for me. But you see, that was only a dream, and like every other dream, has faded into air. I am not the first man that was made a fool of by a woman, nor do I suppose I shall be the last either."

"Don't waste another thought on her, my good fellow. She's not worth fretting about, and the man that has got her, has his own dear bargain in her,

if she was twice as handsome as she is. Take my word for that."

"She has spoiled my life; that's all."

"Rubbish!" cried the priest sturdily, "she has done nothing of the sort. You are not your father's son, nor the boy I take you to be, if at seven-and-twenty you let your life be spoiled by a jilt. She is not the only woman in the world; there are many there just as handsome, and a great deal more amiable and true-hearted. I will say without flattering you, that there are few women, Hyacinth, my man, that would say you nay, and if any such there be, I have no great opinion of her good taste or discernment. I am an old man now, and my time here can't be greatly prolonged, but before I go, I hope to read the marriage service over you, and some good girl worth a hundred such as Caroline Wilson. She is gone now out of your life; let her go. Hyacinth, my lad, let us never mention her name again!"

And they never did!

CHAPTER XIV.

HYACINTH DILLON GOES AWAY AGAIN.

Master, go on; and I will follow thee
To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty.
SHAKESPEARE.

BEFORE they retired to rest that evening, Father O'Rafferty told Hyacinth of the death of his last relative, poor Terry Macnamara. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back; and, weighed down with sorrow and the total failure of all his hopes, the unhappy young man felt as if there was now nothing to live for. On returning from the funeral he thought that Fate had done its worst, but another pang was added on to all the rest, when he heard of Terry's death, and the melancholy circumstances that attended it.

Next morning, at breakfast, he announced to the priest his intention of leaving Ireland again; a

communication which the old man received with surprise and displeasure.

"How is this, lad? You are only just returned to the poor old country, when she badly wants all the help she can get from her children; and you want to turn your back on her after one night in your native place. The country has passed through a terrible ordeal, and is still reeling from the shock, and you and all her other sons should stand by her manfully, until she recovers herself somewhat. If you were poor you could do even a little, but being rich, you could do an amount of good among the poor, sorely-tried people that could hardly be too highly estimated. Your duty, my good fellow, is here at home, and you have no right to shirk it."

"You will be my almoner, Father John; that is a duty *you* won't shirk, whatever *I* do. I shall give you a sum of money to dispense for me, and you will know how to do so, better than any other man I know. But I cannot stay in Ireland; I could not settle down there, at all events not now. I *could not* do it, Father John, and that's the truth. All that I ever loved, or who loved me, are lost to me, with the sole exception of yourself. My inheritance has passed into the hands of strangers; there will never again be a Dillon of Castle Cloyne.

Disinherited, and alone on earth, what tie have I to bind me to Ireland? Don't you understand my feeling?"

"I think I do, but still I confess that the resolution you have come to, has grieved me very much, though I ought to be used to grief by this time. But I have not the heart to blame you. Young as you are, life and the world have dealt hardly by you. Have you traced out any definite plans for yourself?"

"I can't say I have any fixed plan laid down for the future, except that of leaving Ireland for some time. You know, I am not the first Dillon who visited foreign countries, and there must be many of the descendants of those who did go, scattered all over Europe. There are many places abroad, either beautiful in their scenery, or famous in their history, that are well worth a visit."

"There is no harm in that, and it may be productive of much good. To travel enlarges a young fellow's mind, and gives him a knowledge of men, and the world, that he could never gain by remaining stationary. It gives him an opportunity of making friends, that may stand him in good stead another day, and of storing up a fund of pleasant recollections, that will give him food for thought when the time

comes when he must settle down at last. Two or three years will give you quite enough of roving, and then you may be glad to come back to the old man, if indeed I shall then be to the fore."

"I shall return probably in a year, if only to see you, and I may remain then, or I may not. But I must go away at once, for another week here just now, would, I think, set me mad."

"Where do you mean to go first?"

"To London. I must see a lady who lives there, the sister of poor Dacre. He gave me some few trifles—all the poor fellow had in the world—to bring to her, and I made him a promise that I would deliver them to her myself. I shall fulfil my promise passing through London, and after that cross over to France."

"You are quite right. A promise made to the dying is a very sacred thing, and should be sacredly kept; that is, of course, when it is practicable to do so."

On the following evening, Pat Flanagan arrived at the priest's house, and heard with much surprise of this new resolution that had been taken by Hyacinth.

"Oh, blood alive! but this bates cock-fightin'," he cried. "One would think that we had our share, an' more than our share, ov thravellin', an' that we

could rest our bones now for a while, that we're among our own people."

"I am going alone, Pat; so that there is nothing to prevent your having rest. You have earned it well, I must own," replied Dillon.

"An' are you dischargin' me, sir, this away, without no faut?"

"I am not discharging you at all. Though you call yourself my servant, you are not such in reality; at least, you have not been such for a very long time. You are a rich man now, Pat, and need not be servant to anyone."

"I make no doubt, Masther Hy'cinth, but you'll pay whatever is due to me in the matther ov wages, fair an' honest, but beyant that I have no claim in life on you, sir. I took service wid you in the ship when we wor goin' to Calaforny, if you don't forget, an' ever since I was workin' for my hire wid you, an' I have no call in life to ax for more than that."

"You stupid oaf! don't you understand how it is? Of the money we brought home from the gold-fields, half belongs of right to you."

"Be your lave, sir, it don't, not conthradictin' you, though I'm afther doin' it. I won't deny but that I'd take a present from you, sir, if you wor

kind enough to give it to me, an' many's the fine present you ever ga' me, but that's neither here or there. If you plase, sir, I'd take a shuit ov new clothes, an' dear knows, they wor never more wantin' than what they are at the present, for I'm nothing but a stack ov rags, savin' your presence. An' if you have no complaint to bring agin me, out fornint his reverence here, I'd rather hould on to my situation, than be huntin' for another wan wid sthrange people, that I mightn't like at all. So be your lave, while I keep any masther, I'll keep the wan I know, an' that knows me. Sure 'tis an ould sayin', that the divel you know, is betther than the divel you don't know; wid pardon from your reverence for dhrawin' down that ugly man's name at all."

The priest, with his keen sense of native humour, could hold out no longer against Pat's eloquence, but fairly roared with laughter, in which even the sad Hyacinth was forced to join.

"Look here, Pat," he said, when the mirth had somewhat subsided, "I am quite resolved that you shall take your fair share of the wealth that you toiled to win equally with myself. You may call it wages, or a present, or what you please. You can buy the farm that you were always longing to rent, and be as

happy as your heart can desire, and as you well deserve to be. Your old sweetheart, Oonagh, is still unmarried, and may marry you now, though she refused you before; and you know it is a woman's privilege to change her mind. Take courage, man, and try again."

"Well, sir, so I did, no later than this very mornin'. I met her sittin' on her donkey-car on the road beyant afther lavin' this, an' I walked on a couple ov miles alongside the car. I put the ould question to her, an' 'twas the same ould answer I got. 'Pat,' ses she, 'you're a good dacent boy, an' well worthy ov a good wife, an' you'll get wan, too,' ses she, 'but it won't be Oonagh.' So when I parted her I said to myself, that I had no wan now but Masther Hy'cinth in the whole world, an' if he turns agin me, what am I to do at all?"

"I am not turning against you, on the contrary, I have a very great regard and affection for you, Pat, and not greater than you deserve; so great, indeed, that I could not bear the idea of your being my servant. I am going abroad, where not a word will be spoken that you can understand, so that as a servant you would be quite useless to me, and your own life would be very lonely and wretched."

"Useless is it? Beggin' your pardon, sir, I'd be

nothing ov the kind. Arrah, who would you have to brush your clothes, an' polish your boots, or spake a civil word to you in them outlandish forrin parts, if myself wasn't to the fore. I tell you now plainly, sir, that you couldn't do without me at all, though you think you could, an' 'tis sindin' for me you'll be afther a while, as sure as that my name is Pat. Faix, 'tis thruth I'm tellin' you."

"All your arguments, Pat, go for nothing: you cannot come with me abroad."

"Oh, wisha, Father Rafferty, do you hear him? Sure 'tis himself that's arguin' all along, instead ov me. I'm very fond ov the Dillons—sure all the world knows that—but, egg an' bird, I'd back 'em up for conthrariness wid any other family on Ireland ground."

"You'll have to give in, Hyacinth," said the priest, with a smile. "Pat's eloquence hasn't left you a leg to stand on. Give in, man, at once, for I see plainly that you will have to do it later on."

"Well, settle it between you, you and Pat. I see that he is determined on coming with me, whether I like it or no."

"That's the very thruest word, Masther Hy'cinth, that you ever spoke, for I surely am. Whether you took me as your boy, or not, I'd folly you all the

world over; an' how could you prevent me? Answer me that, sir, if you plase. I'd take passage in the same ship wid you, an' stop at the same hotel, an' brush your clothes before you wor out ov bed in the mornin', an' how could you prevent me? Oh, Masther Hy'cinth!" exclaimed the poor fellow, with a faltering voice, "I was born on your father's ground, an' rared on his flure; the only home I ever had was the kitchen ov Castle Cloyne, an' a very good home it was to me—hot an' comfortable, an' wid lashin's an' lavin's ov everything that was good. We wor ov wan age, yourself an' myself, an' great playboys intirely when we wor little gorsoons, an' wor never parted yet. An' now that Oonagh won't have me, sure I have no wan in the world but you. An' still an' all, you're wantin' to turn me off, without as much as by your lave, or a single ha'porth."

"You're all right, Pat," said the priest, as soon as he could speak, for he was half convulsed with laughter. "He is satisfied to keep you; indeed, I don't see that he has any option left him, since you positively refuse to go. And now, my good boy, you may as well commence your new term of service by bringing in the small copper kettle with the hot water, and tumblers and glasses. Both Master Hyacinth and I want something to raise our hearts before we

go to bed. He wants it, poor fellow, and in good truth so do I."

"Long life to your reverence!" cried Pat, and he was off like a shot.

"You will find him more useful than you think," observed the priest when he was gone. "You are too lonely now, and your heart is too sore, to find strangers attractive, at least for the present. And if you were to get ill, which is not unlikely, after all you have suffered both in mind and body, you would find him invaluable. I confess I was by no means reconciled to the idea of your wandering about from place to place, quite alone; but now that I know Pat will be with you, I shall feel quite satisfied. His fidelity to your family, and attachment to yourself personally, are more like the instinct of a dog than the reasoning powers of a human being; and I really think it would come under the provisions of Dick Martin's Act, if you were to drive him away from you. You won't be long away when you will be sure to come round to my opinion."

"That may be. Though he calls himself my 'boy,' I feel that he is a true friend, upon whom I could depend to the last drop of his blood. As you say, his attachment to me has something dog-like in it. While he was pleading there, it went to my very heart

to refuse him, but I thought I had no right to take advantage of his unselfish devotion. There is a very great incongruity in a person so rich as Pat is, being a servant to any one."

"But apart from you, the poor fellow would be perfectly miserable. When you return home in a few years, and settle down, he may be glad to settle down too, in a little place of his own. By that time, he will have got over his disappointment about Oonagh, and marry some good girl that will make him very happy."

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST OF ANOTHER DUMB FRIEND.

Well do I recollect that long-past day,
When thou and I were young, my gallant bay!
Full of proud fire you led the headlong chase,
And distanced all thy comrades in the race.
With quivering nostril, and with straining eye,
And hoof that spurned the earth, you passed them by.
Victor in every field of equine fame,
There was no prize too great for thee to claim.
And now thou liest old and broken down,
The jest and scorn of every gaping clown!

The sun of a more than usually warm day in July was shining down from a cloudless heaven, over the fine old city of Dublin, as Hyacinth Dillon was strolling through Dame Street, on his way to the Bank of Ireland. His "boy," Pat, who had never been in Dublin before, except for a couple of hours *en route* to Liverpool and California, followed him at a little distance, staring about him at all the strange sights and sounds of a large city, with the utmost

wonder and admiration, which he was at no trouble whatever to conceal. Nevertheless he took care to keep his master well in sight, for he was afraid that if he lost him, it would be no easy task to come up with him again in that wilderness of brick and mortar. As Dillon emerged from Dame Street, and came right opposite the principal entrance of the Bank of Ireland, formerly the Irish Parliament House, he stood still for a little to admire the exquisite beauty of a building that has been called more than once a poem in stone! From the front the two sides sloped back with a curve, the grace and elegance of which can scarcely be surpassed. It has been objected that the roof is too low, but the columns that support it with such apparent lightness, but real strength, are so beautifully moulded, and all the different parts of the structure are so justly and harmoniously proportioned, that the objection seems quite groundless, for roof and sides and façade seem blended into one graceful and beautiful whole. In any city of the world it would be hard to find a *modern* building superior to that which, less than a century ago, witnessed the last expiring struggles of a nation's independence, and whose walls have so often echoed to the voices of her most gifted and eloquent sons.

As the young man stood in front of the old

Parliament House, admiring its perfection as a building — both in detail, and as a whole — his thoughts, by a very natural though imperceptible transition, passed from the present bank to the old Senate in the days of its greatest glory.

Within its walls, some of the most eloquent men of a country to whose children eloquence comes almost as a natural gift, won their spurs, and fought a gallant battle for the land of their birth; while many more of them, like her faithless sons in the days when "Malachy wore the collar of gold," basely "betrayed her." There the chief traitor, Castlereagh, plotted and carried out the political annihilation of his country; and not only secretly bribed, but openly bought votes, on a scale, the largeness of which was only equalled by its infamy. There Grattan, "the father of his country," pleaded her cause *sitting*—for, having come from a sick bed, he was unable to stand—and cried aloud in accents of indignant, though impotent, sorrow: "I have watched by the cradle of Irish independence, and I now follow its hearse!"

Hyacinth was well acquainted with the history and incidents of that memorable time. His father had never been a member of the Irish Parliament, for though his birth and fortune were superior to those

of many who had seats in it, yet his creed as a Catholic debarred him from the privilege of assisting in the councils of the nation. But he was in Dublin when the Act of Union was passed, and well remembered all that had been said and done there during that period of great excitement. He was never weary of going over his recollections with the old priest and Terry Macnamara, and as his son was generally present during these conversations, the subject became quite familiar to him, even while he was still a boy. How often had he heard the old gentleman, with the force and vigour of one who had both seen and heard what he was describing, go over again the scene that was enacted in the streets of Dublin, on the last night that a native Parliament had assembled within those walls. Every foot of ground in front of the Senate-house in College Green, and even far along down Dame Street and Westmoreland Street, was occupied by an eager, excitable crowd, that stood there through the long weary hours of the night, patiently waiting to know whether Ireland was still to continue a nation, or to be henceforth nothing but a province. As each of the small band of members who were known to have resisted both the threats and bribes of the minister, and remained faithful to their sense of duty and the

popular cause, ascended the steps of the portico, he was greeted by the most enthusiastic and vehement cheering, which was prolonged until he had disappeared into the House. On the other hand, when any member made his appearance who was known to have sold his vote for a peerage, a lucrative situation in the Customs, or the Law Courts, or a large sum of money, the base traitor was saluted with hisses and yells of scornful execration. And in the wild excitement, the stormy passion, the agony of suspense, the people—not merely the populace, for all classes were represented there—all swayed to and fro in the mighty emotion that stirred their hearts, but still stood patiently waiting through the long hours, until the light of dawn broke over the city.

Within a certain radius of the House, they who stood outside could hear a good deal of what was passing within its walls; the wild, enthusiastic cheering, the scornful repartee, the ironical applause, the loud laughter, the fierce denunciations, the passionate shouts of hatred and revenge! Now and then, some one would come out, and announce with sorrow, that things were looking badly for the old green Isle, and that though the patriots were fighting bravely for every inch of ground, yet that

gradually they were being outnumbered, and beaten. Still the people kept their place in feverish anxiety, hoping on, even against all hope, until the dawn stole softly into the sky, and morning succeeded to dawn, and then they learnt with bitter rage, that their country was no longer a nation, and that their native Parliament was henceforth but a question of history, a thing of the past!

Suddenly Hyacinth was roused from his reverie, by a commotion that took place not many yards from where he was standing in College Green. He saw a crowd running towards a certain spot, and led by the general impulse he also ran, and soon forced his way into the centre of the crowd. The commotion was caused by the fall of a poor old worn-out cab-horse, that from hard work and harder usage, had become completely exhausted, and now lay on the ground, between the shafts of the cab, that had fallen over him. The driver stood over the poor animal, lashing him with a heavy whip to compel him to rise, while he swore the most frightful oaths, by way of an accompaniment to the flogging. The wretched creature quivered as the cruel lash fell on his sore sides and bleeding shoulders, but was utterly unable to rise. The spectators, though probably well used to such brutal

exhibitions, began to cry shame on the fellow, who, finding his blows were of no avail, kicked the poor animal in the stomach, with a savage ferocity that was almost enough to have put him out of his misery.

"Is there a policeman here, to whom I could give this fellow in charge?" cried the indignant Hyacinth.

"Mind your own affairs, an' lay me to mind mine," replied the cabman, who appeared to be intoxicated.

By this time, Pat Flanagan had come to the scene of action, and looking fixedly at the prostrate horse, said in a whisper to Hyacinth: "Oh, tare an' 'oun's, sir! 'tis poor Tearaway, the ould masther's own hunter."

"Oh, Pat, are you sure?"

"Sure is it? Begor, I'd take my oath in it, on all the books that wor ever shut an' opened."

"I believe you are right," said Dillon, looking more closely at the poor creature. "But what are we to do?"

"Rise him first, sir, an' then buy him from that dirty baste that owns him. I wish I had that ruffin where batin' was chape; oh, yarra! wouldn't I give

him enough ov it, without as much as by your lave either."

The two young men at once advanced, and began to unbuckle the harness that attached the horse to the cab, and then, aided by several among the crowd, they raised him from the ground. When, after a good deal of trouble, they had him upright once more, he could only stand on three legs; the fourth—one of the hind ones—hung down, limp and powerless, and Hyacinth saw that it was broken. At once his resolution was taken, and he proceeded to act on it with as much temper and calmness as he could command at the moment by a strong effort of self-control.

"Look here, my man," he said to the tipsy cabman, "I mean to treat you much better than you deserve; and instead of giving you in charge to the police, I will buy this poor old suffering creature from you."

"Oh, then, begorra, if you do, you'll pay for him, so you will. He's a good horse, an' has a dale ov work in him. A couple ov days' rest will set him up agin, as well as ever he was."

"Don't you see, man, that his leg is broken?"

"Well, be the tare ov war, so it is! But so

itself, I'll take five pound for him, not to be onraisonable."

There was a roar of laughter among the crowd, when cabby made this magnanimous offer.

"He'd be dear at five shillings," said one.

"Well, his hide is worth a couple ov bobs more," observed another.

"Split the difference," cried a third ironically, "an' let the gintleman have him for two pound tin."

"I'll never break your word, for you're a dacent man by all appearance," said the cabman, who knew well that the poor creature should be destroyed, and consequently was worth nothing but the price of his hide. "I'll take two pound tin for him, though be the vartue ov my oath he's worth double that, if the bargain was to be betune two brothers."

Without another word Hyacinth took out his purse and paid the fellow, who though he affected to grumble, was secretly delighted to get so well out of a business, that but a few moments previously had promised nothing better than making his appearance at the nearest police-station, and the infliction of a fine in punishment of a gross case of cruelty to animals. Dillon having paid the money, desired Pat to lead away the poor old horse to the

livery stables, adjoining the hotel at which he was staying. Slowly and painfully the poor worn-out, ill-used creature limped off on three legs, his flanks and shoulders covered with bruises and sores, his bones protruding from the skin, and the long, lean head hanging down. It was a miserable sight, and Dillon's heart sickened as he gazed at it!

He went back to his hotel, and in a short time Pat Flanagan made his appearance.

"Masther Hy'cinth, have you that pistol that you had out in Californy, at all convanient? Becase if you have, I want it."

"You are going to shoot poor old Tearaway, I suppose?"

"Sure enough, sir. I think every minnit a year till I put him out ov his misery."

Hyacinth went to a table where a brace of revolvers lay in a case. He took out one of them, and after seeing that it was loaded, put it into Pat's hand.

"'Tis little I thought wanst ov a time that so hard a piece ov work was before me. But it must be done, an' no hand would do it as quickly or kindly as my own."

With the revolver in his hand, he returned to the stable with a heavy heart, and a set, stern face, as if to nerve himself for the hard task he had to do.

It was dinner-hour, and all the men had left the stables, which now contained no living creature but a few horses in their stalls. Pat at once went to that in which he had left his old dumb friend but a few minutes before, and laying the revolver on the ground, put his hand gently on the animal's shoulder, and with his heart beating hurriedly, and his eyes full of tears, spoke to him as he had been accustomed to do in the old times. With the sagacity and tenacious memory of his race, the horse recognised the kind voice and affectionate caress, and with a low faint whinny, laid his head on Pat's shoulder in the old fashion. This broke down the man's firmness completely, and throwing his arms round Tearaway's neck, he burst into a perfect tempest of sobs.

"Ah, Tearaway, my poor fellow!" he cried, "'tis little I thought that it's this way we'd meet agin, an' that 'tis this way we'd be partin' wan another at the last. But oh, *coppul machree!** it would be only poor frindship that would lave you to dhrag on in the way that you're in now. Many's the time I seen the poor ould gintleman on your back, an' it was himself sure that was proud ov you,

* *Coppul machree!*—Horse of my heart!

an' thought that there wasn't your aiquils in the three baronies; an' he wasn't far out in that same. Many's the rousin' gallop yourself an' myself had on the sly, whin the company wor takin' their wine in the parlour ov an evenin', an' I knew I wouldn't be wanted until it was late. Och mavrone! them wor the happy days for both ov us, though we saw hard days since then, both you an' me. But sure I have wan comfort now, my poor fellow, an' that's that no wan will ever agin kick you, or flog the poor ould heart out ov you wid his heavy whip. Oh, Tearaway! ould frind an' comrade! I often groomed an' fed you wid my own hand, an' now, *foreer!* 'tis wid that same hand I must take your life!"

Once more he wept passionately, and pressed his lips long and lovingly on the animal's forehead and eyes. Then, once more bracing himself up for the final effort, he took up the revolver, put the muzzle to the horse's ear, and fired, with such true aim and steady hand that the creature must have been actually dead before he fell to the ground.

"Thank goodness, 'tis over!" he gasped, with a long-drawn breath of relief. "I was in dhread that I couldn't bring myself to do it; an' if it had to be done over agin, I'm sure my courage would fail me. We wor ould comrades, poor Tear-

away an' myself, an' we wor fond ov wan another. He had as much nature as any Christhen, an' more than many a wan ov 'em has. Aye, in throth. But sure, where is the use ov talkin'? It was the hardest job that was ever put on me, an' I wouldn't do it over agin, no, not if I got the estate ov Castle Cloyne for doin' it!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SYDNEY DACRE.

How sad appears the vale of years.
How changed from life's too fleeting scene?
Where are her fond admirers gone?
Alas! and shall there then be none
On whom her soul may lean?

Cynthia's Grave.

In less than a week Hyacinth Dillon found himself wandering from one house to another in the streets of Clapham in search of Alban Villa, at which place the sister of Harry Dacre was residing, as a governess to the children of the retired soap-boiler.

The day was oppressively hot, and the air was actually stifling. The place seemed almost uninhabited, for he met very few people in the streets, and the blinds of all the houses were drawn down, which led him to think that the inhabitants—or at least all of them that could afford it—were absent at

the watering-places scattered along the coast. He went patiently up one street, and down another, in search of Alban Villa, but could not find any villa of that name. Thinking that he must have made some mistake, he looked at his pocket-book, and the name was written on the back of poor Dacre's little parcel in very clear and legible calligraphy. So he continued his search, determined not to spare either time or trouble in obeying the last wishes of the ill-fated youth who had died under his roof, and in his service.

At last when quite weary of trudging up and down, he turned up what seemed to be a by-street, but was in reality a *cul de sac*, having no outlet but that by which he had entered it. When he came to the end, he found a ponderous iron gate, on the middle of which was a brass plate with "Alban Villa" engraved on it. He looked through the gate, and saw at a few yards' distance a square white house of two stories in height, and so surrounded by trees, that any view of the road outside was quite impossible.

Hyacinth rang a bell that was attached to the gate, and after a delay that he thought interminable, an untidy-looking, slip-shod girl appeared in answer to his summons.

"Is it here Miss Dacre lives?" asked Dillon.

"Yes, sir, but the fam'ly isn't at 'ome at present; they are gone to Margate."

"Is Miss Dacre gone also to Margate?"

"Law! no, sir," she replied, apparently not including the governess among the family. "She is within, and in the school-room, all alone."

"Will you take her that card, if you please, and say that I wish to see her on very particular business," and with his card, he put a shilling into her hand. The effect of the small offering was magical, for she opened the gate at once, with a broad grin on her face, and led the way into the house. Showing him into a sitting-room at one side of the hall, and raising the window-blinds, so that some light was admitted into the dingy apartment, she went off to Miss Dacre with his message.

He sat down on a hard horse-hair sofa, and looked about him, while the silence was broken only by the ticking of a bronze timepiece that was on the mantel-shelf. The furniture, though not actually shabby, was very old-fashioned, and of that substantial kind that people buy who always sacrifice the *dulce* to the *utile*. It might as well have been the sitting-room of a lodging-house, as that of a private family, for any attempt that had ever been made to give it a cheerful or habitable appearance. No newspapers

or books were to be seen; no woman's needlework was lying about; no indication whatever that the people who inhabited that house, and spent ten months out of every year there, possessed one ray of refinement, or one trace of gentle breeding, or intelligent culture.

"And this gloomy, sordid place is the home of Miss Dacre!" he said to himself with a shudder; "of the girl who was brought up at 'The Elms,' and the owner of ten thousand pounds! How can she live in such a place, or find companionship with the people who live there, with whom she can have no earthly sympathy?"

The door opened while these and similar thoughts were passing through his mind, and a young lady, dressed in deep but very plain mourning, came into the room. He at once knew her to be Harry Dacre's sister, from her resemblance to him—a resemblance, too, all the more striking, as she seemed to be in delicate health. She was pale and thin, and might have been handsome but for the delicacy of her appearance, and the look of settled melancholy which seemed to be the habitual expression of her countenance.

He rose on her entrance, and placed a chair for her.

"I am Miss Dacre," she said, in a low, sweet voice, and with a pretty English accent that was rather new to him. "The servant told me that a gentleman wished to see me on particular business."

"Even if you had not told me you were Miss Dacre, I should have known you, madam, from your great likeness to your brother," replied Hyacinth.

"Did you know my poor brother, sir?" she asked, while a red flush mounted to her pale face.

"Yes, madam; and it is by his desire, and in compliance with his last wishes, that I have the honour of calling on you to-day."

She made no reply, and he saw that she was trying to master her emotion. She thought he was one of the false friends that had led on her unfortunate brother to his ruin and death.

"It was only a short time before his death that I had the privilege of making his acquaintance," he went on, divining her thoughts; "I never knew him while he was prosperous and happy."

"Pardon me, sir, for doing you an injustice, even in thought; but you will allow that it was natural, under the circumstances. But I cannot think with any patience of those to whom the poor boy owed his destruction, nor would I willingly hold the slightest intercourse with any of them, if I could help it."

"Pray say no more, Miss Dacre; I understand your feeling, and fully sympathise in it. It was in America I knew your brother, and when he died, I was kneeling beside him, and holding his hand in my own."

"I fear, sir, that there is a great mistake somewhere. My dear brother was never in America. He sailed for Australia in the *Céleste*, which was lost at sea, and all on board, with a very few exceptions, were lost also. Therefore it could not have been my brother whom you met in America."

"It *was* your brother, Miss Dacre. He was not lost in the *Céleste*, for the simple reason that he never went to sea in her at all. He missed that ship in consequence of having met with an accident, and then changed his mind as to his destination, going to America in another ship, in which I was also a passenger. We went to the gold-fields when we landed, and it was there he died."

"I do not quite understand," she said in a bewildered way, while the flush faded out of her face, leaving it of a ghastly paleness. He took the little parcel that Harry had given him from the breast-pocket of his coat, and laid it on the table before her.

"These are the few trifles that remained to your

poor brother out of the wreck of his fortune, and before he died he requested me to take charge of them, and deliver them to you with my own hand, when I should have returned to England."

She tried to open the parcel, but her hands trembled so much that she was quite unable to do so. He took it from her silently, and with his pen-knife cut the cords and wrappings that enveloped a little box, containing a watch and chain, a set of handsome shirt-studs, and a letter. That was all, but still enough, for at the first glance she recognised those things as having been the property of her brother. The studs she had given him herself, as a birthday present, and the watch had the Dacre crest engraved on it. The sight of those things was too much for the poor girl, and broke down all the proud reserve which, since her great change of fortune, she had wrapped round her like a garment. A flood of old tender memories rushed upon her soul. She thought no more of Harry's crime, or of his shame; of the frightful poverty to which she had been condemned by his reckless misconduct. She only remembered that they were the children of the same mother, that they had been young together, and that he had thought of her and loved her to the last. She bent her head down on the table,

and cried over the trinkets as if her heart would break.

Hyacinth rose, and walked to the window, where he stood with his back to her, until she had fairly exhausted herself, and could cry no more. Then he went back to his seat without noticing her emotion, and also to give her time in which to recover a little, and began telling her all about her brother, as Harry had told it to himself. How he had taken passage for Australia in the *Céleste*; how, when he had recovered from the accident that had prevented him from sailing in her, and heard that she and almost all on board of her had been lost at sea, the idea came into his mind of letting his sister and everyone else believe that he had gone down in her with the rest; that to strengthen that belief he had assumed a false name, which he had borne up to the time of his death. He told her of how he had imperceptibly been drawn towards the refined, delicate-looking youth who was so sad and reserved; of how, when he got the fever, he had brought him to his own tent, where he had died. The only thing he concealed from her, was the manner of her brother's death. She took it for granted that he had died of the fever, and Dillon thought it would be great and unnecessary cruelty to undeceive her.

She heard him silently to the end, and when he had nothing more to tell her, she said:

"I thank God, Mr. Dillon, for what you have been so kind as to come to tell me about my poor brother, for it has taken a great weight from off my heart. I know that my poor Harry is as surely dead as if he had gone down in the *Céleste*; but he died with a friend beside him, and kind hands gave his remains Christian burial. Oh, Mr. Dillon! it is a great comfort to me to know this; to be able to put the horror of that fearful shipwreck out of my mind at last, for it weighed me down like a horrible nightmare. I have no words in which to thank you for your great kindness to my unfortunate brother; but I do not feel it the less, though I cannot give fitting expression to it."

"Pray do not make so much of very trifling services. I was very glad indeed to have him with me; for the people there were a rough lot, and I could find no companionship with any of them. But with him it was so different, that it placed the obligation on my side altogether. To converse with him was my only recreation in that uncivilised place, and gave me something to think of now and then, besides gold-digging; something better and purer. I dare say, that but for his companionship, it would

have made me as great a savage as most of those men who were at the gold-fields. We were all a very queer lot out there, Miss Dacre," he said with a smile.

She had never seen this man, nor heard of his existence till that day, and now—not a little to her own surprise—she found herself conversing with him in as easy and familiar a manner, as if she had known him for many years. His gentleness and sympathy had put her quickly at her ease, and added to that, he was the friend of her poor, unhappy brother, and had come to her with a message from his death-bed.

Hyacinth would have gladly prolonged his interview with the poor, solitary girl, but he felt that it would be a great intrusion. His acquaintance with her was too slight, and of too recent a date, to permit him to take so great a liberty, and with reluctance he rose to go away.

"I am now going abroad for some time," he said, "but on my return will have the honour of calling on you again, on my way through London, if you will allow me."

"I shall be much pleased to see you, Mr. Dillon, then, and at any other time that it may suit you to call," she replied with a faint smile. "How could

I be other than glad to see my poor Harry's kind friend?"

She gave him her hand, with a simple frankness that was very engaging. As he felt how thin was that hand, and how frail and delicate she looked, and thought how very unlikely it was that she would ever be any better in the uncongenial, sordid atmosphere of Alban Villa, and weighted by the never-ending drudgery of her daily life, his very heart ached for the solitary, desolate girl.

"By the way," he said suddenly, when he had reached the door, as if he had remembered something forgotten until then, "one part of my message, and not the least important, I have yet to give you. I am surely the most absent-minded fellow in the world, and this very awkward peculiarity of mine has tried the patience of my friends on many occasions. Poor Harry had got together a little gold at the diggings, which he gave me to have converted into money for you. It was little better than gold-dust, and only realised fifty pounds, but it was all he had to send."

He took five English bank-notes for ten pounds each from his pocket-book, and laid them on the table before her, with as business-like an air as if the whole transaction was a truth, and not a pure

invention of his own, concocted on the spur of the moment. It was a pious fraud on his part, as the reader need hardly be told, for poor Harry had not given him anything for his sister, but the little parcel and its contents.

"But his funeral expenses should be deducted out of this," she said, quite unconscious of the trick he was playing on her.

"His funeral expenses were very trifling, I assure you, Miss Dacre; for things of that sort are done at the gold-fields in a very primitive and inexpensive fashion. Poor Harry was laid in his place with all love and reverence; but, beyond a coffin, and simple head-stone to mark the spot where he lies, there was no expense, and what *they* cost was a mere trifle, which I am sure you will not offend me by alluding to."

Her eyes again filled, and he turned away, and left her without another word; left her to spend the rest of that bright summer day with her own bitter and sorrowful memories; to bear the keen smart of a freshly-opened wound without one kind word or sympathetic look, that would help to lighten her pain, or get through the weary monotony of the long hours spent in that cheerless place. She had said nothing that could be construed into a complaint

of her surroundings, or associations, although they must have been intolerably galling to such as she was; nor of her duties, though they must have been very irksome to one of her delicate, weak health. The woman who had unhesitatingly surrendered ten thousand pounds to save her brother from the horror of a public trial for forgery, and the honour of her family from disgrace, could not condescend to be irritated by minor vexations. But though she did her best to ignore them, they still must have pressed heavily on her, taking all the joy out of her young life, the light from her eyes, and sapping with slow but sure hand the foundations of her health and strength. What chance was there—in that gloomy, dismal house—of regaining her health, and that gladness and elasticity of spirit that is always its accompaniment, at least with the young? These were all questions that passed through Hyacinth's brain as he walked on towards the railway-station, but for which he could find no answer. It was a perplexing labyrinth in which he found himself suddenly involved, and whatever way he looked at it, he saw no way by which he could get out of it satisfactorily, as far as regarded Miss Dacre, or as it regarded himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

A YEAR OF WANDERING.

The quiet lake, the balmy air,
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,
Are they still such as once they were,
Or is the dreary change in me?

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

HYACINTH DILLON and his man Pat Flanagan proceeded with as little delay as possible from London to that most charming and seductive Circe of modern cities, the pleasure-loving and pleasure-giving Paris! They arrived there not long after the establishment of the Second Empire, and when Napoleon III. had the good fortune to win for his bride one of the most beautiful women in the world, as she was without doubt one of the most virtuous and amiable. Paris was then at its gayest and brightest, full of joy that was never-ending, and yet always was fresh and new; Paris the Happy! Paris the Beautiful!

Hyacinth had letters of introduction to several families holding a good position in Parisian society, and by that means was enabled to see a good deal of the inner life of the gay city. He was also careful to get himself presented at Court by the British Ambassador, and consequently was a sharer in much of the amusement and courteous attention that the Emperor made it a rule to show to all the subjects of the Queen of England, who presented themselves to him properly accredited. There were also many of the descendants of the men who had composed the famous Irish Brigade living in Paris, who recognised in him a member of the family of that Dillon who led the regiment he had himself raised, into action on the banks of the Boyne; of that other Dillon who had died at Fontenoy, and many another Dillon besides, who were hardly less renowned in the annals of the Continental wars of the seventeenth century. All who had ever heard, or read of them, as well as their descendants, now came forward to welcome Hyacinth with the true courtesy of their French birth and breeding, joined to the warmth of the old Celtic blood, that neither lapse of time, nor long naturalisation in a foreign land, could wholly eradicate.

It is not therefore a matter of surprise, that under such favourable conditions, Dillon made a much

longer stay in Paris than he had originally intended. He had arrived there late in the summer, when all who were worth knowing were either at their country chateaux, or at the sea-coast, but though he was told that Paris was nearly empty, he found unfailing amusement in strolling along the boulevards, and visiting the theatres and fine art galleries. The return of the cold weather was sufficient to bring back the birds of passage to their old quarters, and Paris the Beautiful was her own joyous self again. In the perpetual whirl of her amusements, in the exuberance of her delight, and the intensity of her vanity and self-conceit, in that time when "the Empire was peace," it was not possible for her to imagine that the time would come—and that before a second decade was over—when her fierce enemies should surround her walls, and thunder at her gates; when her children should cry out for bread, and get hard bullets in return, and totter rather than walk through her streets, pale and weak from famine; when her bravest and best should be slain in her defence, and when she should be no longer called Paris the Beautiful, but "Paris Infelix"! But then no prophetic Cassandra went crying through her streets, warning her of the wrath to come; no Daniel whose inspired eyes were able to read the

handwriting on the wall, that in less than a score of years was to be made manifest to all the world.

Fresh as he was from the rough life and rude manners of the gold-fields of California, Dillon entered, with all the eagerness and zest of a young man as yet not spoiled by satiety, and blessed with rude health, into many of the pleasures that so abound in Paris, that the difficulty is to make a choice among them. But it must not be supposed from this, that he had forgotten that all the friends of his youth were lost to him for ever. He often thought of his indulgent, white-haired father, of his gentle sister, and of the good old man whose kind face was the last he had seen when he sailed for America, and who was waving his hat in farewell to him until he was lost in the distance. He forgot none; but remembered each and all with a tender, reverent regret, that had in it no touch of bitterness. All was well with them now. They were resting peacefully, free from all care and sorrow, and they had gone down to their place blameless, and without reproach. No invidious or hostile tongue had ever dared to whisper a word derogating from the stainless honour of their lives, and for the loss of such as these sorrow will not refuse to be comforted.

When the second winter came round again,

Hyacinth began to think that he had given more time to Paris, and "the cup of her enchantments," than he had originally meant to do, and that there were many other places well worth a visit, which it would be well to see before he should once more turn his face homewards. He was for a long time undecided as to where he should go next, but as the winter promised already to be an exceptionally severe one, he decided on going to some part of that sunny shore of the Mediterranean Sea that is now known as the Riviera. No sooner did this idea enter his mind, than he hastened to put it into execution. In a pleasant nook, that commanded a lovely view of the divinest of seas, he pitched his tent, and settled down for the winter months. After the incessant activity and variety of Paris, he found a very agreeable change in the *dolce far niente* of that soft Southern land, with its freedom from care, and delicious climate. There was for him a novelty in the country and its people that was very charming, and in a short time, owing to his knowledge of Latin, he learned not only to understand the language, but even to speak it with tolerable fluency.

But every medal has its reverse. It was sad to see, as the winter advanced, the great number of weak, ailing people, who came crowding into the

country, in search of the health that was denied them in the severe climate of their northern homes. Some of them came hoping to recover their health completely in the pure, genial air, while others came merely to prolong for a few months, or even weeks, a life, whose sands had run so low that the end could be only a question of time. Hyacinth felt almost ashamed of his own great strength and vigorous health, as if it were an insult to those afflicted ones to meet him day after day, wondering what it was that had brought him there. The sight of those people often made him think of the pale, consumptive-looking girl—poor Harry Dacre's sister—who was all that time dragging out a weary existence in the dingy, unsympathetic atmosphere of the soap-boiler's house, in the *cul de sac* at Clapham.

He was surprised to find that wherever he went, the remembrance of those unfortunate Dacres haunted him with a persistence, that neither the excitement of travel, nor the novelty of new scenes and faces, could wholly erase from his mind. Two years before he had never seen or heard of them, and now they had obtained such a hold on his imagination, that the very slightest circumstance always served to remind him of them. There was something so sad in their history, although he was sure that it was one

common enough in the world, that attracted him, especially as he had been mixed up in it himself, in no slight degree. He often thought of the poor dead youth, whose head had been as weak and foolish, as his heart had been affectionate and true; whose career might have been so different, and whose fate less ignoble, had he selected his associates with more care, or been under the control of some firm, judicious hand. It was a common case, but that did not make it a whit the less painful or deplorable. But as for poor Harry, the fever of his life was over; so were his agonies of self-reproach and shame, his horror of the irrevocable past, and vain yearnings for a bright and peaceful future that could never again exist on earth for him. Nothing more could be done for Harry; he had sinned, had paid his full penalty of suffering, and was at rest.

But it was not so calmly that Hyacinth thought of the poor girl who had suffered, and was still suffering, although she had not sinned. The image of Sydney Dacre far away in England, and patiently bearing her triple burden of poverty, sorrow, and ill-health, was always before him. All the joyous, pleasant surroundings of his daily life could not suffice to make him forgetful of her pale face, her sad, wistful eyes, her drooping figure, that seemed

bending towards the grave. Even if he were inclined to forget her, the place in which he was, filled with invalids from every land, would prevent it effectually. And all his meditations on the subject ended always by asking himself the question: "Why should Miss Dacre be dying at Clapham, when a winter spent in the Riviera would give her health and life? Ah! why indeed?"

Dillon pondered over this abstruse problem until it became the dominant idea of his life. Caroline Wilson, her beauty, her grace, the passionate love he had once felt for her, and the pain her inconstancy had inflicted on him, were all now forgotten. Miss Dacre was so very poor that she was obliged to earn her own bread. She had no pretensions whatever to the imperial beauty of his first love; she had nothing to recommend her but her gentle birth, her patient meekness, and the proud self-respect that had preferred poverty to dishonour. It so happened, however, that it was of her, and not of Caroline, that he thought in those days; of the poor solitary, delicate governess, and not of the rich fair woman, whose love had been a sham, and whose hand the prize of the highest bidder.

From constantly dwelling on this and similar thoughts, Dillon became impatient and restless. He

ceased to take any pleasure in the great natural beauty that was so profusely spread around him, or in the companionship of the gay and glad-hearted people of the country, that had previously afforded him so much delight.

"I am thinking of leaving this place," he said one day, to his faithful adherent, Pat Flanagan.

"That's no news to me, sir," replied Pat. "I knew that for some time."

"Knew it! How on earth could you know it?"

"Begor, I could hardly tell you that; but I did know it all the same. You wor lookin' mighty quare of late, just as if you neither lost nor won, an' didn't care a thrawneen for any divarshun in life. An' see here, Masther Hy'cinth, I med up my mind to talk to you on the head ov it, only that you're afther dhrawin' it down yourself to me. Yeh, 'tis no admiration in life that you'd be sick ov the place, an' ov the outlandish people that lives in it, wid their quare ways, an' curious lingo, that has neither sinse nor manin' in it."

"Italian is a most beautiful and musical language, Pat, as you would admit if you understood it."

"Why thin, sir, without manin' any offince at all to you, I'm very glad that I don't. I lave it, an'

the likes ov it, to the quollity, for I'm no great shakes ov a scholard, an' I'm in dhread I'll never be wan now, as I didn't take very kindly to the larnin' when I was young."

"Well, at any rate, I see that you have no objection we should be moving homewards," said Dillon, laughing.

"Objection is it? Oh, tare an' 'oun's! Wouldn't I be the proud an' happy boy this day, to find myself rowlin' into Castle Cloyne on the side ov the ould mail car, or atin' my share ov a dish ov smokin' hot murphies, bustin' out ov their skins, an' laffin' wid rale delight to see me out fornent 'em, all the same as if they wor sayin', 'Pat, my fine fella, you're heartily welcome home.' Yerra, lay me alone, Masther Hy'cinth! Be this book," and he gave a sounding smack to the back of his thumb, "I never got a male ov vittles fit for a dacent man to ate, since ever we came to this outlandish country!"

"It is quite evident that you feel no regret in leaving it. We shall start, then, to-morrow, so you may as well set about packing up, while I go off to reckon with our landlord, and pay him his bill."

"Never say the word agin, sir. An' I hope an' pray that we'll never see this curse o' God place agin, nor the sky over it."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Hyacinth Dillon, with a smile.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HYACINTH AGAIN VISITS MISS DACRE.

I can see thee wasting,
Sick for thy native air.

L. E. L.

When our travellers landed in England, Pat's home-sickness had become so great, that Hyacinth sent him off to Castle Cloyne for a short time, promising to let him know when he had decided on his next move. He had not by any means settled on his future plans; indeed, he was very much at a loss himself to know what they were, or if even he had any plans at all. It would all depend, he said to himself, on the visit he should pay Miss Dacre, and the reception she might give him. On that point, however, there was much more of hope than of fear. Why should she not receive him well? He had been her brother's friend, and he would be hers too, if she would only let him be such.

Very soon after landing in England, Hyacinth found himself ringing the bell at the gate of Alban Villa, and his summons was answered by the very same untidy-looking girl, who had appeared to him on his first visit.

"Is Miss Dacre at home?"

"Noa, she's gone, and we have another young woman in her place."

"Has she been long gone?"

"Well, it be a matter of three months or so; it may be nigher to four, now that I think of it."

"Why did she go?"

"She was very sick, and dwining away for a long time. She looked just orful, and Missus said as she weren't no longer able to do her dooty; leastways she weren't strong enough to manage the children, which they were that torment, that they were enough to worrit a Samson, not to speak of a pore young lady, that could hardly stand on her feet, she was that weak and hill. And I'll say this for Miss Dacre, she were a lady that never grumbled, nor made no complaints, nor gave no trouble to a pore servant; and she tried hard to do her dooty by them imperent children, as long as she could."

Here was a blow! He had been learning to

love this poor forlorn girl, whom he had never seen but once, and that a year ago; had been longing to gather her tenderly to his heart, for they were both of them alone on earth, and he had come all the way from Italy, only to hear that he had come too late! He put a crown piece into the girl's hand.

"I am a friend of Miss Dacre's," he said, "almost the only one she has in the world. Could you tell me, my good girl, where I am likely to find her?"

The woman's face brightened up at the touch of the coin, and though up to this point she had been perfectly civil, which was probably due to her recollection of the former "tip," she now became quite friendly and demonstrative.

"If you walk on a little to the right, sir, you will come on some small cottages, which the name is Prospect Row. In the first of them Miss Dacre lodges; leastways, she lodged there a month ago. She may have gone away since then, but if she did, they may know where she is gone—that is, supposin' she isn't dead, as like enough she is, pore creeter! The first cottage, sir, mind; it has a green hall-door."

Thus directed, Dillon went on to Prospect Row, which consisted of a few cottages, looking out on no prospect whatever more attractive than the dusty

street. He stopped at No. 1, with the green hall-door, a small, poor cottage, but neat and tidy-looking, as English cottages generally are. It belonged to very humble people, who lived themselves in the basement story, and let out that above it to lodgers. The mistress of the house, a decent-looking elderly woman, opened the door, and, in reply to his inquiry, told him that Miss Dacre was at home, and sitting up in the parlour. As the parlour was separated from the hall only by a very thin partition, every word that was said in one place must have been quite audible in the other. Dillon gave the woman his card to take in to Miss Dacre, and desired her to ask that lady if she would see him. She returned almost immediately, and opening the parlour door, said Miss Dacre would be very glad to receive him.

The parlour into which he was shown, was a very small room, scantily furnished, and in a tiny grate were a few coals, the very ghost of a fire it was. But he saw neither the mean, shabby room, nor the poor furniture, nor the wretched fire; he only saw Miss Dacre lying on a hard horsehair-covered sofa, which, though drawn close to the window, yet took up half the space of the little room.

She sat up when he came in, and extended both her hands, while a look of glad surprise lighted up

her face. But it soon passed away, and then he saw how very ill she was, and how sadly altered since the first time he had seen her. Over the hollow temples the blue veins wandered in a network that was only too apparent, while the thin, waxen hands she held out to him were almost transparent. She seemed so ill, so frail, and withal so poor and desolate, that his whole soul was stirred with inexpressible compassion.

"This is really kind," she said; "and I am very grateful to you for this visit."

"I was in the neighbourhood, and could not think of leaving it without inquiring for you," he answered, in a dry, matter-of-fact way, just as if he had not come all the way from the shores of the Mediterranean for the very purpose of seeing her.

"Yes? It was fortunate, too, that I was sitting up, for I am often troubled with a cough, and take an invalid's privilege of having my breakfast in bed, when I have had a worse night than usual."

"I fear, Miss Dacre, that the confined air of this small room is not suitable for an invalid."

She made no reply, but shrugged her shoulders slightly, which gesture might mean anything, or nothing. It might have been intended to show that she acquiesced in his opinion, and at the same

time intimating that the matter did not admit of a remedy.

"I think we could manage to get more suitable rooms for you in Clapham," he observed, "larger, and more airy and cheerful. You know, as poor Harry's friend, I must claim the privilege of being of some use to you."

"You are very good. But the place is not uncomfortable, I assure you, though I must confess it *is* small."

"Pardon me, my dear Miss Dacre, for taking the liberty of dictating to you, but you must have better air than that of these rooms. I shall be detained here for some days on particular business, and it would be a great amusement to me to look about, and try to get rooms more fit for an invalid, if you would honour me by accepting such trifling service."

"Oh! it does very well, and suits me in many ways. The people of the house are very civil and quiet, and that is a great deal. My landlady herself is a motherly, kind woman, and her care and attention go far in reconciling me to many things that are not all that I could wish. I might be much worse situated than I am here, I assure you."

"I see that I must take Harry's place with you,

my dear Miss Dacre, and act as he would have done," said Dillon, in a voice that was half playful, and wholly in earnest. "I must see about more suitable lodgings for you, and a nurse, and a carriage, and——"

She interrupted him with a pleasant laugh.

"The very thought of all those fine things is enough to make me well again; but you forget, Mr. Dillon, that I am poor, and that I cannot afford such luxuries. But for my poor brother's fifty pounds, I could not pay for even this cosy little room, that you despise so much."

How glad he was now, that he had thought of giving her that fifty pounds, and pretended that it was poor Harry's last gift to her!

"I hope you have had a pleasant time while you were abroad," she said, as if to change the subject.

"Yes. I enjoyed Paris immensely. It is a wonderful city, full of life and sunshine. I went from Paris to the Riviera, which was also very pleasant, though of course in a different way altogether." And then he began giving her a lively description of everything that had amused and interested him while he had been abroad, partly, to give himself an excuse for staying with her, and partly, because it seemed to please her.

"I was in Paris for some weeks at one time," she

said; "my uncle brought me there, and when we left it we went on to Rome. I was much pleased with Rome, for we were there during the Carnival, and everything was so strange to me, and so unlike anything that I had imagined. I was very sorry when we had to come home to bleak Northumberland again, and leave the sunny South behind us."

After a little more of this kind of conversation, he felt that he had trespassed too long, and rose to go away.

"I am really very grateful to you for this visit," she said; "it has been a great pleasure to me to see poor Harry's friend once more."

"Then I hope you will allow me to repeat my visit on to-morrow. I am obliged, as I told you, to remain for a short time at Clapham, and as I have no friend or acquaintance here but yourself, I will consider it a great privilege indeed if you would permit me to come to see you during the idle hour that I have every day at my own disposal."

"I shall be very much pleased to see you for poor Harry's sake, and for your own sake too," she added, with all the *naïveté* of a guileless, innocent heart.

He thanked her, and went away. All the rest of the day he spent in wandering through the streets of Clapham, full of love and pity for the poor desolate

girl, who in all the earth had no friend but himself. When first he saw her, he had pitied her with that sort of pity we feel for a dumb creature wounded beyond hope of cure; but now he loved her with the unselfish love that is born of that pity, and is its noblest outcome. He felt that for him there was but one woman in all the world, and that was the one so sorely stricken; stricken, it might be, unto death, if some speedy way of saving her was not resorted to. He was her only friend, and yet what could he do for her? He was rich, and what better use could he make of his money, than to take her out of the grime and penury of her present abode, to the bright, sunny land he had left behind, where alone she could get a fair chance for health and life, if indeed there remained for her even a chance? But it was only as his *wife* that he could bring her there, or that she could go. For himself, he asked no happier lot than to have the right to transport this poor drooping flower to a brighter sky, and a more genial clime; to watch over her, and win her back to health, and by the devotion of his life to make her some atonement for all that she had suffered.

If this poor girl had a mother, or sister, or even an old servant, any one other than a stranger, who would take care of her in her illness and loneliness, not for

money but for love, her case would not be so hard. But she was quite alone, with no mother's heart to lean on, and no hand save that of a hireling to minister to her in this her day of sorest need. The paupers who lived in alms-houses, and ate the bread of charity, were better cared for than this poor gentlewoman, who was long-descended, and had been tenderly bred!

Again, what could he do? He asked himself this question over and over, as he paced the streets hour after hour in feverish restlessness. He could not presume to offer her pecuniary assistance, for he was neither kith nor kin, and even if he were bold enough to do so, he made quite sure that his offer would be rejected by her promptly and decidedly. And in the meantime she was slowly dying, and though the means of giving her health and life were in his hands, he should stand aside, and let things take their course. It was murder, he said to himself, merciless, downright murder, and that murder would lie at his door for ever and ever!

He went again next day to see Miss Dacre, and many days after that he went also, still pretending that he was detained in Clapham by indispensable business. Whether it was only fancy, or because it was really the case, he thought every time he saw her,

that she was worse than she had been on the day before. She did not complain; on the contrary, she brightened up when he came, and declared that his visits roused her, and gave her something to think of besides her own ailments. Each time that he came, he remained longer with her, and every day she became more dear and precious to the heart of the solitary man.

However, this state of things became after a little time intolerable to him, and he resolved to end it, in one way or another. He went to London and brought back with him a physician, who was celebrated for his successful treatment of diseases of the lungs. He brought this gentleman to see Miss Dacre, and introduced him to her as an old friend of his, who had come to Clapham that day professionally, and having met him, came at his desire to pay Miss Dacre a friendly visit. He had made up this story with the doctor on their way from the station, and the credulous, innocent girl believed the fiction to be truth, because it was told to her with grave faces. This artful young fellow was now so great an adept in deception, where she was in question, that it came quite natural to him, and he managed to make it look so like truth, that she took the counterfeit for reality.

He waited at the end of the street, until he saw the great physician leave the house where Miss Dacre lived.

"Well, doctor," he said, in a voice that he tried to make appear calm and unconcerned, "what is your opinion of Miss Dacre? Be candid with me, I entreat you!"

"Certainly I will. The young lady is without doubt in a very precarious state of health, and requires great care and constant watchfulness."

"Is she in consumption?"

"Well, not exactly in consumption, but she is rapidly drifting towards it. Her lungs are still sound, but I cannot answer for how long they may remain so. At the end of the winter, if I should see her again, I should in all probability find the germs of consumption, not only fully developed in her system, but so far advanced, as to render her recovery almost hopeless."

"Oh, doctor! is there no help, no remedy?"

"Undoubtedly there is. If she could be removed to a milder climate than that of England for the winter and spring, it would give her a chance of life. I will go even farther, and say that it would go very far towards effecting a complete recovery."

"You think, then, that it would give her a chance of regaining her health?"

"Oh, much more than a chance. Her illness, like a thousand others like it, is owing to a neglected cold, which was aggravated by want of care. I fancy, too, that mental trouble of some sort had previously broken her down. *As yet* there is nothing more seriously amiss with her than what a winter spent in a warm climate—say Egypt, or Cannes, for instance—will be sufficient to set right."

"Would any part of the Riviera suit her?"

"You could not have thought of any place more exactly suited for a person in her state of health."

On hearing this good opinion from the great oracle, Hyacinth's face expanded into a smile that lighted it up from chin to brow. The physician looked at him steadily for a moment, and then indulged in a low, but very expressive whistle.

"I have given you my professional opinion, for which you have paid me," he said with a smile. "I shall now give you another opinion, for which I shall not require any fee at all; and as it is the cheaper of the two, it is also the more pleasant."

"And what is that, doctor?"

"It is to marry the young lady, if she will have

you, and take her off at once to Cannes or Mentone. Either place will do for her very well. Now, my dear sir, I must say good-bye; the train will leave in another minute, and I am due in London for a most important consultation in an hour. But take care that you follow my advice—I mean that for which you gave me no fee," and the genial physician, laughing very heartily, shook hands with Dillon, and jumped into a first-class carriage just as the train began to move off.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO LETTERS, AND WHAT CAME OF THEM.

> And the night shall be filled with music,
> And the cares that infest the day,
> Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
> And as silently steal away.
>
> LONGFELLOW.

THE next day Hyacinth Dillon wrote two letters. The first was written in the morning, and was intended for Miss Dacre, and this he left himself at the door of her lodgings, with directions to have it given to her after she had had her breakfast. It was as follows:

"MY DEAR MISS DACRE,

"My business in Clapham being now concluded, I have made arrangements for leaving it in a day or two, and it depends on you, whether I shall leave it a happy man, or one sorely wounded and

disappointed. In the course of our late intercourse, you must have seen that I have become deeply attached to you, and that I regard you with feelings of tenderness and affection such as I shall never feel for any other woman. When first I sought you out, it was for your brother's sake, and in fulfilment of the solemn promise that I made him before his death; but a warmer and deeper feeling rose out of that visit, and I learned to love you for your own sake, more than for his. That love has taken such possession of my whole being, that I cannot any longer remain without declaring it to you, and telling you that you, and you alone, can be the companion of my future life. I want you, dearest Miss Dacre, and you want me, for it is only as your husband that I can restore you to health, or, at least, use my best endeavours to do so. As your husband only can I take you out of England to a warmer climate, snatch you from disease, and win you back again to health. Give me the right to stand between you and the world, and to make up to you in some degree for all that you have lost. Do not reject me, I beseech you, or send me forth to wander over the earth a lonely and disappointed man, for, if you say me nay, no other woman shall ever be my wife.

"I have not the courage to *say* all this to you,

for I am a very blundering, matter-of-fact sort of fellow, and I fear would plead my own cause but badly in a personal interview. And, besides this, I think it would not be quite right to take you by surprise in your present weak health. I shall await your reply with the utmost anxiety, for upon it will depend all the sunshine of my future life. If it is not a favourable one, I shall not pain either you or myself by asking to see you again. But oh, dear Miss Dacre, be pitiful, as I am sure it is in your gentle nature to be, and remember that he who sleeps in his foreign grave would join our hands together, if he still lived, for we two were all he loved.

"H. DILLON."

In a couple of hours the answer to this letter came. He laid it down on the table before him, and looked at it for some moments before he had the courage to open it, not knowing what his sentence might be. At last he tore it open, and found that the sheet of note-paper in the envelope had but one word written on it. That word was "Come."

It need hardly be said that he was not slow in obeying this short but expressive invitation, and went at once to see his beloved, so soon to be his wife. In

the evening when he returned, he wrote another letter addressed to the parish priest of Castle Cloyne.

"My dear Father John,

"I hope you don't forget that it was always an understood thing between you and me, that whenever I should enter into the holy estate of matrimony, you and no other priest should perform the ceremony. The time has now arrived for the fulfilment of your promise, as I mean to be married as soon as you can conveniently come to London. Pray forgive me for giving you such short notice of this great event; but you can well understand that I could tell you nothing about it until I first knew whether the lady would accept me or not. The marriage must take place with as little delay as possible, for my dear girl is not in very good health, and has been ordered to a warm climate for the winter. This must be my excuse for begging you to come to me very soon. I think every day an age until I can bring her to the sunny land, where with God's blessing a new and a happier life is waiting for her; so like the good old friend that you have always been, make no unnecessary delay in coming to us. You baptised me, dear Father John, and you know I would hardly think myself rightly and really

married, if any priest but yourself were to tie the knot.

"I know you will grumble and growl a great deal because the future Mrs. Dillon is not an Irishwoman, but it will be some consolation to you to know that we are of the same persuasion in religious matters. Her family, the Dacres of the North, were always Catholics, and clung to their faith through all the bitter severities of the penal laws. Tell this news to Pat Flanagan, for he would think it unkind of me not to let him know it; and if he cares to come and see me turned off, bring him with you. I am quite sure he will come, for it would not be like Pat to absent himself on such an occasion. I dare say he will want to come with us; and I shall not object to it this time, as I shall, I am sure, find him very useful. He was so when we were in Italy before, and not a little amusing also. I shall meet you at the Euston Square Terminus on whatever day you appoint, and meanwhile remain yours affectionately,

"H. Dillon."

Father O'Rafferty was not slow in replying to this letter, and, on the day he named, Hyacinth met him on the platform when "The Wild Irishman," as

the train from Holyhead is called, shot into Euston Square Station. As Dillon fully expected, the priest was accompanied by Pat Flanagan, dressed in a brand-new suit of "broadcloth," in honour of the approaching wedding, which he imagined was to be on a very magnificent scale.

When the first greetings were over, Hyacinth said to Pat, with an arch glance at Father John:

"Why, Pat, this is a pleasant surprise. I thought you hated Italy, its people, and food, and all belonging to it, so much that you would never consent to go back there again, on any terms, or under any circumstances."

"Folly on, Masther Hy'cinth; folly on, sir. What else would I do, but go there when you wor goin'? Blood an' 'oun's! did you think you wor to get married, an' myself not to be to the fore? Faix, that would be a quare story to have tould at the home in Castle Cloyne!"

Father O'Rafferty had never been in London before, and as he had arrived early in the morning, Hyacinth proposed that when they had breakfasted at the Railway Hotel, the rest of the day should be devoted to sight-seeing; a proposal to which the old man assented with all the eager gladness of a boy. He had come to the modern Babylon to enjoy

a brief holiday, due to him after several years of mental trouble and hard work of body, and for a short time to leave care and sorrow behind. They first went to see the Houses of Parliament, and then they took boat, and went down the Thames to the Tower. These and similar other places were more to the good father's taste than the fashionable parks or centres of public amusement; for though he was only a plain country priest, he was a learned man, and found much pleasure in visiting those famous historical landmarks, of which he had read so much, though he had never seen them until now. However, when they sat down to dinner at the hotel, he confessed that both eyes and brain had had quite enough of sight-seeing for one day, and that he was then very glad to sit down in quiet, and "take his ease at his inn."

"Now, Hyacinth, my boy, tell me all about it," he said, when they were alone after dinner. "Tell me all about this bride of yours, and how you found her out."

So Hyacinth told him of "his whole course of love," beginning with his first meeting with Harry Dacre on board the ship in which he went to America, and continuing, until he brought down the story to the present time.

"Sydney is not as beautiful as Mrs. Murray was," he said in conclusion, "but she is good and true, and worth a thousand such as Mrs. Murray. She is not rich, as Caroline was; but what of that? Money is the last thing to be thought of in marriage by any true man, and I have enough for both. If it pleases God to restore her to health, I shall esteem myself one of the most fortunate men in the world."

"Oh! you are as wild about her, I see, as you were about Caroline Wilson," said the priest slily. "You were quite crazy about that girl, man; you can't deny it."

"Well, if she gave me the poison, she was good enough to supply the antidote. I do believe she really never cared for me, and I was able to read her true character before it was too late. You were more clear-sighted about her, Father John, than I was, for I don't think you ever liked her."

"No, my lad, I never did. That match was altogether against my advice and judgment, but poor Terry Macnamara—the Lord be good to him!—humbugged your poor father into it. But he did it for the best, poor man, I'll say that for him. She had a power of money, and the two estates lay alongside each other very handy. To keep up the old family, and clear the property from debt, was

what poor Terry was thinking of; so he never pulled bridle until he had it all settled, and between you and him, the old gentleman couldn't hold out. And see yourself what a house of cards it all turned out."

"Well, I bear Caroline no malice for having thrown me over, for as you see, father, I am none the worse for it. I hope she has nothing in her new life, that makes her regret the old one."

"I hear her bargain is anything but a good one, and that she is far from being as happy as she expected to be. Her fine spark of a husband was up to his eyes in debt when she married him, and her father was obliged to pay large sums for him more than once. The last time he paid, he took his oath on the Bible that he never would do so again, under any circumstances."

"Poor Caroline! I loved her once very much," said the young man, with a sigh.

"Nonsense, man. It was only calf love, and that's a disease every boy is bound to take, like the measles, once in his life. I must say that you had it very badly."

Hyacinth laughed, for the humour in the priest's face was contagious.

"I am sorry to hear poor Caroline's great

marriage has turned out such a bad business. Evidently she made a great mistake. What is to be the end of it?"

"The end of it is as clear as that two and two make four. She will have to come back to her father, sooner or later, for no decent woman could live with the fellow, if only half of what is said of him be true; and then he will go headlong to destruction in his own fashion. And you need not have so much pity for her. She will be comfortable enough at Beech Hill while her father lives, and at his death she comes in for all his property, as it is settled on herself, absolutely. She has the whip-hand of Murray there; her father took good care of that, small blame to him for that same, I say."

In another week, as soon as the necessary formalities had been arranged with the Catholic bishop of the diocese, for the proper solemnization of the marriage, the good old priest had the pleasure of uniting the son of his old friend to the bride of his choice. The ceremony took place in the house, for many reasons. There were no bridesmaids, nor a "best man," nor any witnesses, except the landlady, Pat Flanagan, and a respectable young woman that was to go with them in the capacity of lady's-maid. It was the very quietest of all quiet weddings,

though a very happy one. There were no tears, for the simple reason that there was no one there to shed them. Hyacinth was radiant with happiness, so was his bride, and the only feeling of regret they had was that poor Harry Dacre was not there to share in their gladness.

But there was one person present at the marriage that was not content, and that was Pat. The extreme quiet, or, as he expressed it, the great "maneness" of the whole affair, thoroughly disgusted him; and he had the satisfaction of giving full expression to his feelings on the subject, when, after the simple wedding-breakfast, he walked to the railway-station with the priest, carrying his portmanteau, a thing he would not entrust to a porter, lest it should be considered not respectful enough towards "his reverence."

"Oh! begor, sir, it isn't like a weddin' at all."

"I don't agree with you, Pat. I think it was a very nice quiet wedding."

"Faix, it was quiet enough, surely. No wan can deny *that*. But still an' all, it wasn't the sort ov weddin' that his father's son ought to have."

"What do you mean by that, Pat?"

"Wisha, your reverence knows right well what I mane. Augh! 'tis little the ould masther—the

heavens be his bed this night!—would like to see his only son married in such a hole an' corner sort ov way. If them is the new-fangled ways that's comin' into fashion, I put the back ov my hand an' the sole ov my fut to 'em. If he could see the kind ov weddin' we had this blessed an' holy mornin', it would make the poor old gintleman turn round in his coffin, an' it would be no admiration in life if he did. *I* never hard ov a Dillon ov Castle Cloyne married in the way that I seen the last ov a good ould stock married this day. There wasn't a bridesmaid, nor a best man to give him up, unless you call Pat Flanagan wan, for want ov a betther, an' all the company that sat down to breakfast—if I may call it a weddin' breakfast; it was a mighty quare wan, in throth—was their two selves an' you. Sure, if two beggars wor married by a common *tackem*, it couldn't be more disrespectable every way."

"It was a very suitable wedding, Pat, when we take all things into consideration. Mrs. Dillon was very delicate, poor thing, and very friendless, for all her relations are dead. His friends are all dead, too, or far away at home in Ireland, so a quiet wedding was what suited them. They are as firmly married as if the ceremony was performed in the

church of Castle Cloyne, and all the idle ragamuffins of the parish were shouting after their carriage."

"Yeh, good luck to you, father, an' don't be dhrawin' down such comparishments. To be comparin' Castle Cloyne to this blaggard hole ov a place, an' thin to stand up for a weddin' that a hucksther at home would be ashamed to have over her little girl. Och mavrone! God be with the fine ould times!"

"There was much, no doubt, that was good in them, but we must own, there was also much that was very bad."

"Oh! good or bad, I wish that we had 'em back agin. I remember when ould Mihil, the huntsman down at the lodge-gate, got his little girl married, an' that the ould masther hard ov it. Fake an' sure, 'twas himself that sint the grand an' the plintiful weddin' down to 'em—tay, an' sugar, an' loaves ov bread, an' a ham, an' a fine piece ov roastin' beef. An' my hand to you, the company wouldn't be dhry no more than hungry, for he sint down two gallons ov whiskey; Parliament, no less. I needn't be remindin' your reverence ov it, for sure it was yourself that sat at the fut ov the table. An' the ould masther ordhered me to put the horse to the jauntin' car, an'

scour the whole counthry, till I got Jack Hennessy, the blind piper, an' bring him back wid me. 'And, Pat, my good boy,' ses he, 'don't come back to me without you bring that schamer ov a piper wid you, dead or alive,' ses he. 'Bedad, sir,' ses I, 'I'll bring him, sure enough, if he has only as much life in him as will blow the chanther; but what am I to do if he's dead?' 'Well, then,' ses he, an' never as much as a smile on his face, 'you can bring him *dead.*' Them was his very words, your reverence, as sure as that I'm standin' here fornent you. God rest his soul! the poor ould gintleman, 'tis he that had the pleasant way wid him, ever an' always. He had a great respect for his ould huntsman, an' wished that his little girl should have a dacent weddin', an' full an' plinty at it. An' see yourself, the sort of weddin' his own son had to-day; just as if your reverence was a common *tackem*—askin' your pardon for mentionin' you in wan breath wid a suspended priest."

"That very prodigality that you admire so much, was one of the causes of the downfall of Castle Cloyne," said the priest with a sigh.

"May be so, sir, I don't like conthradictin' you. I know well how the thing is, but I'm not scholard enough to put it into good English. Augh! if it was only a peeler that was married in the ould times, he'd

have a dacenter weddin' than what we had to-day. Times is changed, so they are!"

"And all the better, Pat. Our wedding to-day was a religious ceremony, conducted with proper respect and decorum, and was not made an occasion for waste and folly."

Still Pat looked incredulous and discontented.

"I'll tell you what you had best do," said the priest, trying to look grave: "come back with me to Castle Cloyne, where I know a nice little girl that will just suit you; and next Shrove-tide, we will have a wedding after your own heart."

"I wish I could, Father John, but you see Masther Hy'cinth could never do without me. If you saw an' hard him for awhile, 'tis then you'd know how it was. 'Tis only Pat here, an' Pat there, an' Pat, you villyan, why isn't such a thing done? An' now he'll be so taken up wid his wife, that sorra thing he'll do at all, only lave it all down on top ov poor Pat. So you persave, sir, why I can't go wid you. The pair ov 'em would be lost intirely in forrin parts, if myself wasn't to the fore wid 'em."

The priest laughed heartily at the mixture of ignorance, conceit, and dog-like affection for his master, that were all jumbled up together in Pat's head. While he was still laughing, the train came

into the station, and he had to take his place in it. In another moment it began to move, and Pat, following the example set him by the country people at home, kept running along the platform waving his hat. But iron machinery is more than a match for human nerves and muscles, and he was very soon left behind, still waving his hat, with much affectionate demonstration.

"I must hurry back now, an' see to the cordin' ov them thrunks," he said, half aloud. "As they're bint on thravellin' to-night, I have no time to lose. 'Tis well for him, that he has a vally de sham that will look afther his thraps for him. Augh! I often seen new-married people, an' what rale fools they make ov theirselves! I'm thinkin' Masther Hy'cinth will folly the lade given him by all the rest, an' that it will be a while before he'll rise out ov it. It won't last always, that's wan comfort. The honeymoon sometimes lasts a month, an' ov an odd time a little longer; 'tis all accordin' to the nature ov the people," added Pat reflectively. "I seen some, an' it didn't hould a week wid 'em. I remember when Jim Cusack married the widda woman that kept the little shebeen house at the cross roads, an' three days afther the weddin', he gave her such a mortal flakin' that she had to take the law ov him, an' all because she wouldn't give him up the

resate for the little thrifle she had in the bank. But there are two sorts ov husbands, like everything else in the world. That dhrunken savage Jim Cusack was wan thing, an' Masther Hy'cinth Dillon, Esquire, of Castle Cloyne, is another thing!"

There are two kinds of sunshine, one natural and the other social, and the latter acts upon the mind with the same healing and curative effect that the former exercises over the body. And as mind and body are inseparable, and linked together in some mysterious way, that which confers pleasure or inflicts pain on one, reacts in a similar way on the other. When the two are combined in the reception of a beneficial influence, how harmonious is the effect produced, how happy is the result! Under the life-giving sun of the Genoese Riviera, and breathing its balmy air; cared for with a sleepless, untiring vigilance that watched every look, anticipated every desire, and loved with the tenderest devotion, the young wife of Hyacinth Dillon recovered her health slowly and gradually, but not the less surely. The sunshine of love and home was just as effectual in promoting her recovery, as the sunshine that streamed down on her from the bright Italian heaven. And as health and strength returned to her body, so did her spirits regain elasticity and gladness. In nine cases out

of every ten, happiness is the great physician—as it is also the great beautifier—and where that is wanting, sunny skies and genial air cannot do much.

Do the good-natured readers who have accompanied me thus far in my Chronicles, feel any desire to know what the future held in store for Hyacinth Dillon and his fair young English wife? In thankful return for their courteous companionship, I shall slightly lift the curtain, and try to put into words the outline of some fantastic visions respecting them which have passed across my mental gaze, not all at once, but one by one, at various intervals of time. The first is, that the person to whom Miss Dacre had given her fortune to save her brother from a public prosecution, died after a few years, and left her in his will half the amount of the money she had so unselfishly sacrificed. It seemed that the man had some conscience hidden away in a hiding-place, of which none but himself possessed the key, and that at the last it would remain no longer hidden and silent, but with clamorous, importunate outcry imperiously demanded to be heard, and to have its requirements complied with.

The second vision shadows forth the bankruptcy of the London hotel-keeper who had purchased Castle

Cloyne, and the sale, for the second time, of the old estate in the Encumbered Court. It was bought by one of the local solicitors, "in trust," for Hyacinth Dillon, the last of the old family that had owned it for ages.

"My dream was past, it had no further change." I could see no further into the future—dim, and far distant; and even what I did see might have been nothing but a dream. It might be so, or it might, on the contrary, be a pleasant reality. Who can tell?

CONCLUSION.

> And though the day be never so long,
> It ringeth at last unto even-song.
> QUEEN ELIZABETH'S *Book of Hours.*

I HAVE lost sight of Oonagh for a long time—my sweet, unselfish Oonagh!—so strong and yet so tender, so loving and gentle, and yet so brave—but I have by no means forgotten her. Now after the lapse of many years I take up the thread of her story once more, albeit the end is very near. I began with Oonagh, and it is only right I should end with her. She was a true heroine, the type of all that is most worthy and admirable in womanhood. She was endowed with much personal beauty, yet she was as humble-minded as she was lowly born, and her life was beautiful in all things; full of unselfish goodness, blameless purity, and an undeviating adherence to what she considered was her duty.

There are many women in the world like Oonagh—

thank God for it!—although the world knows them not. It does not sound their .praises, nor glorify them, nor does it, in fact, notice them at all, because it cannot understand them. This is in no way strange. Their forgetfulness of self, their fidelity to duty, their untiring devotion to causes that are not their own, though they have made them so, are all silent though emphatic protests against the hollowness and self-seeking of its creed. The world utterly ignores such women while they live, and forgets them when the grave has closed over them. But as their work is not done for the world, so neither do they desire its sympathy, nor covet its applause. They go on their quiet way, looking neither to the right nor left, and enjoying a peace and inward happiness that the world can neither give them nor take away. They may be poor, and very generally they are so; they are ridiculed, and laughed at, and pitied by turns, as being the victims of some Utopian craze; or their motives may be misunderstood, or their lives may be calumniated. But they are proof against the ridicule, and they live the calumny down.

It was a bright and sunny Sunday in the early summer-time, and the scene is laid in a small country town in the South of Ireland, with which

I conclude my story. This town, the centre of a large rural district, was on this particular Sunday in a state of great and unusual excitement; unusual, because in its normal condition it was a very quiet place, a sort of Sleepy Hollow, that never woke up to anything like a stir, except on rare occasions, such as fair days, and Sundays. A deadly sort of little town, in whose streets the small boys that played at marbles, and whipped their tops on the side walks, had it generally very much to themselves, and where births, marriages, and deaths, were the only subjects of conversation.

But on this special Sunday morning, something of more than ordinary interest occupied the thoughts of the townsfolk. The streets were thronged with people of all ages and classes, dressed in their best clothes, and all wending their way towards the Roman Catholic church. The event that caused so much excitement, and called together a more than usually large congregation, was to be a solemn service for the repose of the soul of the late curate, who was just one month dead. Mass was to be celebrated by his successor, the Reverend John Molloy, who was that day to officiate for the first time in the parish. It was the young priest's first curacy.

As soon as he had been ordained, he had induced his foster-mother to give up business altogether, for she had laid by, not wealth indeed, but quite sufficient to supply her own simple wants, now that he would be no longer a burden on her. He had taken a very small cottage for her near the town, where they could live together, and the evening of her life go down in peace. It had a little garden attached to it, as well as a field for a cow, which he knew would afford her occupation and amusement, to take care of. He had furnished it comfortably, but plainly, on economical grounds, as well as that he knew it would please her best, as being what she was best used to. When all was ready, he went to bring her home to her new house, where in all probability the rest of her life would be spent. Very proud, as well as very happy, was Oonagh to find herself, after all her weary travelling, in this harbour of refuge, the home she had so often dreamed of, and longed for, and where she and her boy were to live together.

On the following Sunday he was to say his first mass in the parish, and she was dressed very early, so that she would not delay him when it would be time to set out to church. A very proud woman was Oonagh, when she walked up High Street,

with the new curate by her side, and saw all the people they met touching their hats to him with the utmost respect as they went along. Even the children were eager to show him reverence, the boys by pulling at their front locks of hair, and the girls by dropping a timid curtsey, which made up in respect for what it might have wanted in grace. Oonagh was now an elderly woman, but notwithstanding the hard life she had led for several years, retained many traces of the comeliness of her youth. Her skin had of course the hard, weather-beaten look that constant exposure to the air is sure to give, and the once thick dark hair was interwoven with silver threads. But nothing could destroy the beauty of the sweet, flexible mouth, or the calm, candid expression that shone out from her soft gray eyes. The look of perfect content and happiness that pervaded her face, the light that beamed around it coming from a heart at peace with itself and with all the world, brightened, glorified and made it look young again, and beautiful with a better and nobler beauty, that youth alone could never give it.

Oonagh had that morning put on a suit of new clothes, of a kind superior to any she had worn since she was a girl, so that she would do no discredit to the young priest in the town in which he was to commence

his ministry. A dress of dark cashmere, a plain black shawl, and a straw bonnet trimmed with grave-coloured ribbons, were what became her station in life, and yet looked well and respectable. She was sensible enough to know that she was not a lady, and had not the least resemblance to one, so she did not make herself ridiculous by adopting a style of dress that would be very unsuitable to her position, as well as unbecoming to her age and appearance. She was quite satisfied with herself when she looked in the glass before leaving the house, and apparently her foster-son was well satisfied too, to judge by the bright smile with which he received her when she came out of her room, prayer-book in hand, to the little parlour where he was waiting for her. Not in that little country town, no, nor in broad Ireland, was there a happier pair that bright day in June, than issued forth from that modest cottage, with all their hopes realised to the fullest extent, and all the old days of hardship and privation passed away like a dream.

As soon as they arrived at the church, he brought her to a quiet corner, where she could have a view of the altar, and still hear mass unobserved by anyone; as he knew she would prefer being left to herself at such a happy time.

"Don't leave this until I come for you," he said; "and that will be immediately after mass."

He left her, and as soon as she was alone she fell on her knees, and covering her face with her hands, poured forth her full heart in fervent, though voiceless, thanksgiving. How good God had been to her! she thought; how good and merciful, beyond all her deservings! He had sustained her through many trials, comforted her through many sorrows, and, to crown all, had now given her the desire of her heart, and brought the work of her life to a successful conclusion. What more could she ask of Him? what more had she to live for? She was well content now to die, for her day's work was done, and the shadows of evening were gathering fast around her.

The church soon began to fill, and the persons composing the choir went up to the organ-loft. They were all good musicians, sent for to a distance to help to give additional solemnity and lustre to this important requiem mass. But the stir caused by their arrival, or the noise made by the people taking their seats in the different parts of the church, did not disturb Oonagh in the least. She was too much absorbed in her own happiness, to take heed of anything that was passing around her.

At last the bell rang, and preceded by many white-robed boys, a number of priests filed out from the vestry, and ranged themselves around the altar. Last of all, and attended by two deacons, the new curate came forth to say or rather sing High Mass. Among his other gifts, he had a fine voice, which made him be specially selected for the celebrant on this occasion. As he went up the steps of the altar, Oonagh in her remote corner half raised herself from her knees to have a good look at him. But a mist came over her eyes, and her head got so giddy that she could not see, and she felt so weak that she had to grasp the railing before her to keep from falling. She was roused by the clear, fresh voice so dear to her, giving out the first strain of the *Kyrie Eleison*, and taking up her prayer-book she endeavoured to join in the service. But it was in vain. She tried to read, but could not distinguish one word from another, so she laid down the book, and once more fixed her eyes on the altar, with her whole soul in her gaze.

There was her boy standing on it, and "wearing the robes," at last! He had been born in the direst poverty, his parents had both died on the same day, in the last extremity of want and disease that humanity could suffer, and no other fate remained to the only child they had left behind, than the

cold shelter of the workhouse in his youth, and in his manhood to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But *she* had rescued the weak, delicate child from so hard a fate; made a gentleman of him, and given to the Church a good and pious minister. And then again she bowed her head, and gave thanks to Him who had made her the humble instrument in doing His own work.

In a little time she felt so weak that she was obliged to rise from her knees, and sit down at the back of the pew. And then as she looked again at the altar, she remembered her dream! There was the fair-haired young priest standing on the altar, and celebrating mass, exactly as he had appeared to her on that past All-Hallow Eve, after she had joined in the Dumb Cake with the two other girls. *Their* dreams had been fulfilled long ago, and lo! so now was her own!

At that moment the wailing notes of that noble piece of sacred music, the Sequence for the Dead, was poured forth by a solo bass voice, which, though solemn and melodious, was yet laden with sorrow and regret for the lost:

Dies iræ, dies illâ
Solvet sæclum in favillâ
Teste David cum sybillæ.

As a matter of course, Oonagh had often before heard the grand old hymn, but now it went to the very depths of her soul. The verses were sung alternately by the solo bass and by the full choir, and were done as much justice to, and produced as fine an effect, as if they had been sung in some lofty old Gothic cathedral, instead of the modest little church of an obscure country town. Again, as she listened, the feeling of faintness came over her, and she leant her head against the wall for support, just as the choir sang out the verse:

> Rex tremendæ majestatis!
> Qui salvandos, salvas gratis,
> Salva me, fons pietatis.

The strain rose and fell, and floated in solemn music through the church, filling it with waves of sound; and still Oonagh, with a look of ineffable joy and peace on her face, remained silent and motionless, with her head resting against the wall of the pew.

When mass was over, the priests filed back into the vestry in the same order in which they had left it, and the congregation began gradually to leave the church. The young celebrant was disrobing himself in the vestry, when the clerk rushed in to him in the most excited manner, and cried out:

"Oh! Father Molloy, come out, sir, if you plase; there is a woman in a dead faint outside, an' I'm in dhread that she's dyin'—if she isn't dead by this."

Quickly the young priest followed the clerk back into the church, and over to the quiet corner where, but so short a time before, he had left Oonagh apparently in perfect health. Now she was leaning back against the wall, perfectly still, while an ominous pallor was spread over her face. He bent down and took her hand, calling on the crowd of idlers that had gathered round, to fall back a little, for God's sake, and let her have some air.

"Is there a medical man in the church?" he cried out aloud.

As he spoke a gentleman sprang down from the gallery, saying: "I am a medical man, father. Fall back there, my good people, and let me see the patient."

He laid his hand on the wrist of the motionless woman, and then on her heart.

"She is quite dead, and has been so for more than half-an-hour, I should say," he cried, with the decision of a professional man. "Disease of the heart, I am almost sure, but that can be more accurately ascertained by the post-mortem examination, for of course there will be an inquest."

"There is no necessity for an inquest," replied the young priest with a quivering lip. "I am her adopted son, have all my life known her, and I can certify that she had disease of the heart of many years' standing. She had a severe rheumatic fever at one time, and her heart became affected by it. The doctor who attended her then is still living, and can tell you the same thing. The excitement of this day has, I am sure, hurried her away. I might have known that it would be too much for her. Ah, well I might have known it!"

He fell on his knees, and kissed the dead hand. "Oh, mother! more than mother!" he exclaimed, in a burst of sorrow. "You have left me just when I could have helped to make you happy. The great loss is mine, but the great gain is all your own!"

THE END.

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